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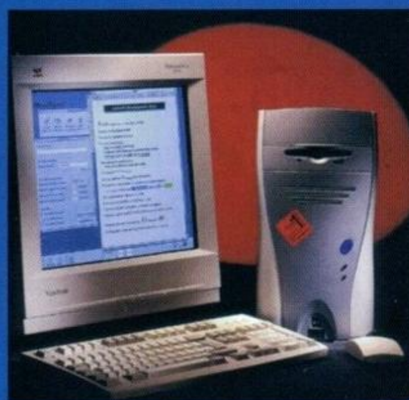


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These machines have mainly come from schools and businesses. As such there are various brandings, labels, markings, scratches, very occassional broken bits (e.g. front flaps) on the cases. All machines have been generally cleaned and air dusted inside to get rid of most of the dust, however the cases have not been meticulously cleaned as this would take a long time and increase the prices considerably. Any machines which have PC cards are usually 486 cards, but as these are basically worthless, their value has not been taken into account (and they might not have all the software on the disc to work them anyway). Get free carriage if you also take a monitor (the 'b' indicates an additional £10 carriage charge). Keyboard, mouse and mains cable included. Single slice machines do not have backplanes unless specified. Ethernet cards etc. can be taken out if not required. There is a three month warranty on these machines and they are supplied 'as seen', so to speak. All details are subject to change and please check availability before ordering.

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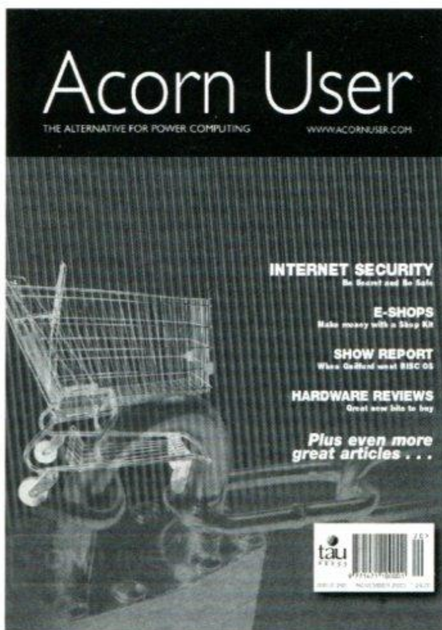
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Editor's Comments

Reasons to be cheerful: as I write this we are just one week away from the Guildford show that was so exciting last year. And we're hoping for another bumper event.

This time we are certainly looking forward to one or two exciting revelations. I was looking forward to two or three but it turns out that one of them has already been revealed, as mentioned in last month's Stop Press.

Impression has been the mainstay of RISC OS word processing and DTP for a very long time. It is not as good a word processor as TechWriter and it's not as good a DTP program as Ovation Pro. But it was the first and many people swear by it.

When it was first designed it was revolutionary in ease of use and in capabilities. Well perhaps its capabilities have been exceeded by other programs but, for me at least, its ease of use hasn't been.

The context sensitive pointer which means that there is no requirement for toolboxes specifying "text" or "frame" editing which you find in all other DTP programs. It's extremely flexible style system all these add up to an excellent program.

Of course no one knew, when it was created, that the Acorn printer drivers would not keep up and so, as a professional DTP tool, it falls down seriously nowadays, whereas Ovation Pro most certainly is a very professional design tool, and programmable as well.

So Paul Reuvers of X-Ample Technology in the Netherlands has succeeded in acquiring the rights to develop Impression. To convert it to 32-bit (thus removing another "reason" for not upgrading to the Iyonix); to remove long-standing bugs and irritations; and hopefully to develop it further. Perhaps we'll even get an undo function, just one level would be nice.

On a less happy note it has come to my attention that ExpLAN may have to cease trading. Not through any fault of theirs but by an unpleasant coincidence: A recent PC virus used ExpLan's domain name as one of those it claimed to be coming from. The end result has been a bombarding of their domain by gigabytes of bouncing and angry mail completely swamping their system. Plus the likelihood of litigation from businesses damaged by the virus attacking anyone they think might have caused the problem.

A sad situation, hopefully they will pull through.

Rob Donaldson



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Cheap RISC OS machines to go

This month sees a flurry of PC-based "RISC OS" machines using the Virtual Risc PC emulator.

R-Comp's offering is their RISCube, a small-form-factor computer capable of running RISC OS and Windows software. When you boot up your RISCube, you are given the choice of RISC OS or Windows, and can then run whatever software you wish.

These are based upon their existing SpaceCube range which are shoe-box sized PC machines, with stunning looks, small size and low/medium noise. The RISCube is based on the same chassis but suitably expanded to allow correct operation and compatibility with RISC OS.

RISCubes are available in a variety of specifications, ranging from entry level, StrongARM-class performance up to machines giving results suggesting 400-500Mhz RISC OS performance. No benchmarks are available which backup these claims but an initial comparison can be gained from the benchmarks shown in last month's magazine.

Since RISCubes run RISC OS 4.02 (they can also run Select) you are ensured a high level of software compatibility, ranging from your favourite RISC OS productivity applications (Impression, Ovation Pro, Artworks, Eureka, Schema, DataPower and so on) to music, and even games.

RISCubes are being supplied with R-Comp's UniPrintVA software which allows RISC OS to print to almost any printer with a WindowsXP driver. This includes USB, parallel or even Windows-only printers.

The RISCube is targeted at RISC OS users looking for a Windows machine (for whatever reason). The RISCube combines RISC OS and Windows into one small package, giving you the best of both worlds without cluttering up the desktop. R-Comp point out they are not recommending people who are looking for a single RISC OS machine to use a RISCube, as an Iyonix or Omega may well be better suited.

An entry-level RISCube provides circa StrongARM level performance. It is supplied with a CD re-writer, DVD player, mid-sized hard drive, USB, firewire (Windows only), Networking, PS2 keyboard/mouse ports, TV out, printer port, and floppy drive. All machines ship with RISC OS 4.02 and UniPrintVA, and WindowsXP Home (Pro is available as an upgrade if needed). An entry-level machine comes with 256Mb of RAM with 16Mb for graphics.

R-Comp also offer a higher end machine (giving claimed performance well beyond StrongARM level) which includes a large, ultra-fast hard drive, AMD 2600+ processor, 512Mb of high-end, dual-channel

DDR RAM with up to 128Mb Nvidia graphics with dual-monitor capability and all the connectivity and features of the entry level.

R-Comp can customise your RISCube online if you wish to specify exactly what components you want in your RISCube. Pick the components, and a price will be calculated as you choose.

A standard RISCube costs £699 inclusive (about £575+VAT and carriage) while a high specification version costs £899 inclusive (£745+VAT and carriage)

R-Comp have also reduced the pricing on their equivalent "PC only" SpaceCube PCs. For example, an entry-level machine falls by nearly £75 to £525 inclusive while a high-end machine falls nearly £175 to £725.

For more information, please see the R-Comp Web site **www.rcomp.co.uk**

The other "Virtual RISC OS" machine is the "A6" from Stuart Tyrrell Developments. Measuring little bigger than a stack of A4 paper, the machine is designed in a novel miniature case, measuring some 32x21x18cm (12.6 x 8.3 x 7" approx).

Despite its small size, the case allows for ample forced airflow around internal components. Its contemporary styling is a step away from traditional machine casing, and complements virtually any office/study environment. Front panel ports give easy access to headphone connections, USB and so on.

Under VirtualRPC-SE, users can expect performance which meets or exceeds that of the fastest traditional StrongARM Risc PC machines (287MHz), and applications requiring disk access can exceed the speeds of this machine significantly. STD have promised independent benchmark results to be published as soon as they are available.

Available in three variants, all machines come complete with DVD drive or DVD/CDRW, fast hard drive, Floppy disk, 400MHz dual-channel DDR memory, Geforce 4MX graphics, 56K internal modem, 10/100BaseT networking, 4 x USB ports, 2 x IEEE1394 ports (Windows only), S/PDIF optical (input Windows only, output RISC OS/Windows), Windows XP Home and VirtualRPC-SE. Keyboard and mouse are of course included, along with speakers for those machines where they are not part of the monitor.

All software is installed, leading to a "ready to go" RISC OS environment. Plus you can switch from RISC OS into Windows XP should you need. The machine variants are:

A6B Base unit/DVD/40G hard drive/256MB memory for £599 exc VAT (£703.83)

A6 15in LCD monitor/DVD/CDRW/80G hard drive/512MB memory for £899 exc VAT (£1056.33)

A6DB 17in LCD monitor/DVD/CDRW/120G hard drive/512MB memory for £999 exc VAT (£1173.83)

Carriage: £25+VAT

The machine has a dedicated Web site at **www.thea6.com**

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We have also recently heard that

Coventry-based Microbits (02476 661 001) are also planning a PC-based RISC OS computer. Interestingly Microbits have been offering "PCs as peripheral servers" for several years with a lot of support for those wanting to replace their PC cards.

Movies at last

Spellings Computer Services Ltd, the team who brought you Aemulor, the 26-bit emulator for Iyonix PC, have announced details of their next project: "Cino" This new product is a complete DVD movie player and filing system for RISC OS systems, including Iyonix and earlier machines (movie playing on the Iyonix only).

The project itself consists of three parts: A software DVD Player; DVD filing system; and digital surround sound output

A world-first for RISC OS, Cino is a software DVD player for the Iyonix PC and RISC OS 5. Using some of the advanced hardware features only present in the Iyonix PC, Cino can playback the high resolution video and digital sound found on DVD Videos within your RISC OS desktop, or "full screen" in movie-mode.

An early development version of Cino playing video from DVDs (albeit at a much reduced frame rate) was demonstrated at the Guildford show showing that it could definitely be done.

The project also includes DVDFS, a much enhanced CD and DVD filing system offering many advantages over the existing CDFS:

- Ability to read DVD-ROM data discs
- Improved CD support, including the ability to read CDRW's (UDF) and "joliet" long filenames
- Planned support for DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R and DVD+RW formats
- DMA transfers over the IDE bus for drivers which support it (Iyonix only)

DVDFS will initially be released for the Iyonix PC only, but will eventually support older RISC OS hardware like the Risc PC and A7000.

The Iyonix PC only offers stereo sound output, so to obtain the full benefit from Dolby Digital audio and 5.1 surround sound present on most DVD Videos, the Cino project also includes a PCI sound card and RISC OS driver. This may also be extended in the future to give the ability of outputting digital signals (S/PDIF) for connection to separate home cinema surround decoders.

Pricing and availability of all components are yet to be determined. And users will have the option of buying the Cino player, which will include DVDFS, or just DVDFS without the player.

A fully supported DVD ROM drive will also be available as a bundle if required, as will the PCI sound card and RISC OS drivers.

A more detailed FAQ is now available on the Cino web site at **www.cinodvd.com**

Commenting on the announcement, Neil Spellings, Director and project manager states "We are very excited about bringing the ability to play this exciting format to RISC OS. The Iyonix PC has given us the hardware capable of performing all the advanced decryption and decoding required for full high quality audio and video.

"The DVD format is now mainstream, and Cino will allow Iyonix owners access to the many hundreds of 1000s of movie releases in this high quality format, along with all the extras only found on the DVD-Video format such as making-off documentaries, theatrical trailers and directors' commentaries. Also, DVD data discs are slowly replacing CD-R as a high volume storage medium, and Cino will allow all RISC OS users to read data stored on them"

Jack Lillingston, Managing Director of Castle Technology, manufacturers of the Iyonix PC adds "We are very excited to see DVD capability come to the Iyonix. The fastest RISC OS desktop machine is a great platform for producing new and exciting software for RISC OS users, and Cino is a fine example of this"

www.cinodvd.com

Free monitor offer

Castle are offering a free 19in Iiyama CRT monitor with certain models if purchased before February 2004. In addition for all orders placed before the 12th December 2003 Castle will give you a free USB memory card reader as well.

Full details can be found on the Iyonix PC Web site at **www.iyonix.com**

Castle Technology Ltd, Ore Trading Estate, Woodbridge Road, Framlingham, Suffolk IP13 9LL

Tel: (+44/0) 1728 723200
Fax: (+44/0) 1728 727427

X-Ample revises Impression

X-Ample Technology of The Netherlands have taken over Impression from its former developers Computer Concepts. This means that Impression will be available for sale again to existing users of 26-bit RISC OS machines by the time you read this. Work on a native 32-bit version of Impression has already started and we will keep you updated as to their progress.

Impression was always known as a very fast application (it is quite responsive even under Aemulor emulation). So this will be of special interest to Iyonix owners, who currently run Impression under Aemulor, as a native 32-bit version is likely to offer much greater performance.

All existing versions of Impression, such as Style, Publisher and Publisher Plus, will be replaced by a single new version: Impression-X and will contain all features of Impression Publisher Plus, such as named colours, improved colour support and support for professional publishing. Pricing and availability have yet to be determined, but there will be an upgrade path for existing users.

As X-Ample now have access to the Impression sources, they have also promised to fix some long-standing bugs and will be adding new features. Initial work will concentrate on the 32-bit conversion and the fixing of bugs, but new features will be added soon after.

Existing and new users are invited to visit the dedicated Impression Web site at **www.xat.nl/impression/** Users are also kindly requested to report any bugs and "wish lists" so they can prioritise their efforts. Please send any comments to **impression@xat.nl**

32bit Iyonix-compatible upgrades now available - please phone!

All products are compatible with StrongARM and RISC OS 4
Some products are enhanced for RISC OS 4
All prices include VAT and UK carriage (where applicable)



HERE IS THE NEWS...

22 Robert Moffat, High Legh, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6PS • Tel 01925 755043 • Fax 01925 757377 • http://www.rcomp.co.uk/

RComp

rcomp@rcomp.co.uk

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Image Outliner (26/32bit) £17.50

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WebsterXL £30
Web Designer's Toolkit v2+ £30
WebSpell (HTML-aware spelling checker) **£15**

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High speed 10 and 100Mbit card £79



TEK is available now!

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Budget digital USB cameras

Stuart Tyrrell Developments have released two digital cameras for RISC OS machines fitted with the Simtec USB interface. These miniature cameras measure a mere 83 x 40 x 27mm (3.27" x 1.6" x 1.04"), and easily fit into a shirt or trouser pocket.

They are equipped with a 2.1MegaPixel sensor, and are capable of storing an average of 41 pictures at 1600x1200, an average of 87 pictures at 1024x768, or any combination. A 3MPix mode produces 2048 x 1536 images using internal interpolation.

Images may be viewed on a 1.5" colour TFT screen, both when framing a picture and when reviewing the resultant picture. This screen also gives feedback as to settings and frames left, along with allowing for setup of the camera.

In addition to a self-timer function, the cameras are equipped with a macro mode for close-up, and a 4x digital zoom which allows for easy framing of images.

The cameras come complete with batteries, USB cable, a carry loop and a miniature tripod. They are supplied with drivers for both PC and the Simtec USB card.

There are two variants of the cameras, one having a flash fitted for operation in low-light conditions. Although the specification of these cameras are high for their class, and the results taken with them impressive, they are not designed to replace a professional-class camera. RISC OS users who require the highest quality, full featured cameras are encouraged to consult dealers specialising in top-end cameras.

Pricing is as follows:

- STD Standard Digital Camera : £79 + carr + VAT = £99
- STD Flash Digital Camera : £96 + carr + VAT = £119
- Simtec USB card: £69.95 + carr + VAT = £89

STD are also undergoing a restructuring, which involves a new name, more staff and separating their business-to-business side from their retail side. The name Stuart Tyrrell Developments will become a trading name of Advantage Six Ltd.

Retail customers will continue to trade with Stuart Tyrrell Developments as before. Phone numbers and addresses will remain the same, your calls will be answered by the same people. However Stuart Tyrrell Developments gains the protection of a larger parent company.

Current and potential business-to-business customers will become direct customers of Advantage Six Ltd, enabling these transactions to be handled more efficiently. Further details will be provided to these customers as required.

Forthcoming months will see the addition of further staff to the team. Familiar to many RISC OS users will be Matt Edgar. Hailing from a similar training background to Stuart Tyrrell, Matt arrives on a permanent basis with over 12 years of experience in software and electronic design and specialises in scalable solutions. Visitors to their stand at the Wakefield show may have already met Matt, and benefited from his expertise and good nature.

Simtec update USB stack

Version 1.55 is a bug fix release to improve stability and interoperability still further. While an upgrade is not required it is advisable for all users.

This update can be found from the support area on the Simtec web site at **www.simtec.co.uk/products/AUUSB11POD/resources.shtml** and general USB updates can be found at **www.riscos-usb.com**

All users will benefit from some small speed improvements and reduced resource requirements. In addition to these improvements bugfixes, which have been produced as a result of the use of the stack outside the RISC OS market, improve compatibility with a wide range of devices which do not properly conform to the USB specification.

APDL announce 32-bit conversions

It's been a while coming, but APDL now appear to be getting through their enormous back catalogue of software with 32-bit conversions suitable for RISC OS 5.

A new version of the classic Repton have been released, comprises the original Repton, Repton 2, Repton 3, Around the World in 40 Screens, Life of Repton and Repton Thru Time, all 32-bit safe. Desktop Repton is supplied on CD with colour printed manual and costs £19.90

Upgrades from earlier APDL-ProAction versions are available as follows: from the original version in CD jewel case, £12; from the later version supplied in DVD case, £6

For upgrades you must return your original CD. All prices include VAT and UK carriage. Please add £1 carriage for overseas shipments.

StarFighter 3000 Other Worlds games CD will shortly be available. This CD contains Air Supremacy, Elite, SunBurst and, of course, StarFighter 3000.

The new version of StarFighter 3000 is now 32-bit safe and is currently being tested on the Iyonix. It has various improvements over earlier versions. It is supplied in a DVD case with printed manual. This new version will cost £19.90 including VAT and UK carriage.

An upgrade from the earlier APDL-iSV Products versions is available for £11.50 including VAT and UK post. You must return your original CD. Please add £1 carriage overseas.

EasyFont Pro is now 32-bit neutral and has been tested on the Iyonix. The EasyFont Pro CD package comes with over 2,400 professional fonts and costs £19.90 including VAT and UK carriage. Please add £1.50 carriage outside UK.

Users who already have the latest version of EasyFont Pro, supplied in a DVD case with printed manual, can upgrade for £5 inclusive. There is no need to return your existing CD.

Users who have an earlier version of EasyFont Pro from iSV Products can upgrade for £10 inclusive. You must return your original CD with your order. Please add £1.50 carriage outside UK.

Version 4.10 of DrawWorks Select is now available. DrawWorks Select is the latest and best version of the highly acclaimed DrawWorks package and costs £39. This

new version has a number of improvements and will be available at the RISC OS South East Show.

Existing users of DrawWorks Select will shortly be able to download a free upgrade from the iSV Products section of the APDL Web site. Note that this upgrade will only work with DrawWorks Select.

An Iyonix-compatible version of the entry level version, DrawWorks SE, is now available for download from the same site. As with earlier versions of DrawWorks SE this can be used without charge.

APDL, 39 Knighton Park Road,
Sydenham, London SE26 5RN
Tel: (+44/0) 20 8778 2659
E-mail: sales@apdl.co.uk
Web: www.apdl.co.uk

Midlands show cancelled

The ARM Club Midlands show which was to be held on 29th November 2003 at the Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham has been cancelled.

As many of you will have read in the national press, the normal venue, the National Motorcycle Museum, suffered a severe fire on the 16th September, destroying several parts of the building, and rendering many more parts unusable. The suite booked for the show was damaged in the fire, and has been declared unsafe.

The ARM Club were unable to find a suitable venue to host a computer show and have taken the decision to cancel the show for this year. Exhibitors have been contacted directly, and those who had paid deposits will have these refunded in full.

At this stage the ARM Club are planning to run the show again in 2004, by which time the Museum should be back in functioning order.

Web: www.armclub.org.uk

ArtWorks 2.09 released

MW Software have released Artworks 2.09 to all registered users of Artworks 2. Artworks 2 offers a whole range of new and enhanced features over the original Computer Concepts-developed version, plus the ability to run on the Iyonix PC as its 32-bit neutral. Some feature highlights, and new items in 2.09 are:

- 32-bit compatible to run on Castle's XScale-powered Iyonix computer
- Page rulers with origin control
- A Skew tool to accompany the Rotate and Scale tools
- Document stationery: create a new document by choosing from a menu of user-defined standard documents
- Control over the distance of text fitted to a curve from the curve
- Control over the starting offset of text fitted to a curve
- A print setup tool to select the area of the page to be printed (useful when proofing small parts of a large size document) including the ability to set numeric printing offsets
- Word/Paragraph selection in text areas by double/triple clicking
- Text export from text areas
- Saving JPEGs that are embedded in
- ArtWorks files
- User-defined dash patterns
- Control of both width and height of arrowheads
- Computation of the area of shapes
- New unit "pix" representing the size of a screen pixel.
- Optional warning about unused sprites in the sprite pool when saving a document
- Configurable default font, font size, join style
- Uses the RISC OS Choices system thus allowing each of multiple users to have individual choices settings (network or RISC OS Select only)
- Almost complete German and Dutch dialogues in addition to English
- Full interactive help for all tools, dialogue boxes and menu entries (English only)
- Separate line width unit configuration (so you can have "pt" for line widths and something else as page units)
- Pressing the Space bar switches to the previously used tool
- ArtWorks document windows now obey the Wimp configuration settings about moving windows off the screen

New options "Keep Info Box on screen" and "Keep Tool Box on screen". When switched off, the Info and Tool Boxes obey the Wimp configuration settings. This allows multi-desktop utilities, such as Larger to work correctly with ArtWorks 2

There have been many additional improvements including:

- Automatic reformatting of text areas when fonts are substituted or when fonts are found to be available that used to be substituted when the file was saved
- Holding down Ctrl when placing the caret in a text line allows you to click between characters as well, you do not need to click on a character as before ("relaxed" caret placement)
- Improved auto-save feature: no longer displays a save box that can swallow key presses
- New grid types (rectangular, isometric, radial) are compatible with transparency
- Holding down Ctrl makes the marquee selection box select all overlapping objects as in Draw instead of only fully enclosed objects

- Plain text import improved: If the "New text always black" option is set, then the text does not inherit the current line colour and other outline attributes

- Better ColourBar integration, it moves with the main window immediately

- In all save boxes, dragging an icon now drags a sprite instead of a dashed box and you can drag right to the border of the screen
- Dozens of bug fixes, some for long-standing ArtWorks 1 bugs

New option for Draw import, "Create as editable colours" (with the settings "None", "All" and "Standard colours only") controls for which colours ArtWorks creates editable colour menu entries

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E-mail: martin@mw-software.com
Web: www.mw-software.com

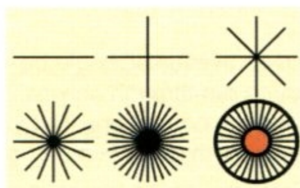
Graphics Problem Page

Q: Dear AU, I have to supply artwork for my club's newsletter, but the woman who puts it together uses a Mac. What's the best way of getting the artwork to her?

A: First, what format is your artwork in to begin with? If the graphic is in bitmap format, for example created in Paint, there are many conversion programs: ImageMaster, Creator, ImageFS, and so on. Convert the artwork into a TIFF or JPEG, which can then be used by both Macs and PCs.

If the artwork is in vector format, created in Draw, ArtWorks, Vantage, and so on, then you have a few options. Using DrawWorks or ArtWorks 2, for example, you can save a Drawfile as an Illustrator file, and SVG file, or even a PDF file from DrawWorks), at least one of which will be usable by your Mac-user friend (and her PC-using sister too). Failing that, DrawWorks and ArtWorks 2 can also save in bitmap format: JPEG or TIFF format would be best.

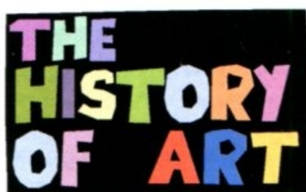
Q: Dear AU, I have to create an image of spokes of a wheel, but I don't know how. Help!



A: Relax, it's easy with elementary maths on your side. First, in Draw, turn the grid on (Shift+F1 and F1 to show the grid) and create a line 8cms long. Now give it a width of 2pts and copy it (Control+C). Place the copy directly on top of the original line and go to the Transform menu: Rotate, 90 degrees. Group all (Control+A; Control+G). Copy the result and again place it over the original, and rotate 45 degrees. Group all, copy, place over original and rotate 22.5 degrees. Finally, group all, copy, place over original and rotate 11.25 degrees. This gives you a 32-point star; add a couple of circles and you've got a basic wheel shape.

Q: Dear AU, All my friends seem to submit exciting looking assignments while mine are the same boring thing time after time. I'm miserable.

A: Fret not! What you need is a hook,



some zing: something which grabs your teacher from the get-go. Why not use a splash of colour, and render the title of the essay in an interesting font. You could create a font to suit the subject matter, or simply create intrigue with an unusual looking font. Try creating the letters simply with the straight line tool in Draw or ArtWorks. Start by drawing roughly the shape of a letter, and let your imagination dictate where you go.

If you're happy with the result, carry on with the other letters in the headline. If not, start again. If there are two of the same letter, create them differently, otherwise it'll look too mechanical. You want originality, and there's nothing more original than letters you've created yourself!

Now add colour, go wild! For a real knock-'em-dead effect, use pastels or garish colours against a black background. You need never again feel the frump of the college.

Q: Dear AU, How do I create a shadow effect?



A: Simplicity itself. Say you want a shadow behind a rectangle in Draw. Make sure the rectangle has a solid fill and no line colour. Copy it and fill it with a grey. Copy that, offset it and fill with white. Send the white shape to the back (Control+B) and group it with the grey. Go to the Select menu, down to Grade, and click on "8". Send the result to the back and place it behind your original shape. Viola! A nice shadow effect.

If you like, you can increase the number of grades to make it a smoother shadow.

Q: Dear AU, In my DTP program, I keep getting "widows", single short words that sit alone on the last line of a paragraph. Is there anything that can eliminate this embarrassing problem?

A: You can link these words to the immediately preceding word in the paragraph with the use of a non-breaking space. Simply type Alt+space, or Alt+160 to create the space, and the two words will be permanently joined. You won't have to spend time cleaning up the loose ends once the document has been laid out, and there will be an end to unsightly widows.

Q: Is it possible to create graphics for the Web using basic tools?

A: Yes. If you're creating headlines or buttons, for example you can create them in Draw or Paint, and then pass them through InterGIF, a free but totally wonderful application which converts Drawfiles, Sprites, etc to GIFs ready for your web site. Both ArtWorks 2 and DrawWorks can do this using InterGIF internally.

For photographs, JPEGs are mostly the preferred option, as they're not too big, but they retain the quality of image. You'll have ChangeFSI which can convert Sprites to easily. You can set the compression values of JPEGs in most programs, but this will need some experimentation, as there is an optimum level where the file is small-ish, but the quality is till OK.

Q: Dear AU, I simply can't draw, but the boss has asked me to design the Christmas menu. Please, please, please, tell me what to do!

A: Firstly, don't panic! Persuade your boss to invest in some CD-roms filled with clip art. Clip art exists for people like you, so don't feel that you mustn't use it. Clip art is royalty-free, copyright-free, hassle-free, so relax, have a cup of tea and enjoy picking out the right illustration for the job.



Nigel Gatherer
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Modern Cryptography

Until the late 20th century, strong cryptography was the preserve of government agencies and the military. But thanks to the advent of fast modern computers, cryptography with a 'military' level of security is now available to the masses.

Cryptography is so commonplace nowadays that many people are even unaware that they are using it in their everyday business. If you have ever used a PIN to obtain cash from a bank's ATM, or a secure Web page to order goods over the Internet with a credit card number, you have used cryptography.

In order to discuss this subject, it is useful to define some conventional terminology.

The word 'cryptography' originates from the Greek: kruptos (hidden) + graphein (to write). Cryptography is the science of creating secure cryptosystems for making data unintelligible to those for whom it is not intended.

Cryptography is complemented by cryptanalysis, the science of 'attacking' cryptosystems, in other words cracking them or discovering weaknesses in them. Together, these form cryptology. Modern cryptography has become strong only because of the interaction of these two branches of cryptology. As cryptanalysis reveals weaknesses in various cryptosystems, cryptographers devise new and stronger cryptosystems in order to defeat all known methods of cryptanalysis.

Figure I illustrates the general scheme of a cryptosystem. The original data is known as the plaintext, and it is encrypted to produce the ciphertext. The reverse process, decryption, reproduces the original plaintext. The methods of encryption and decryption in any particular cryptosystem are described by a fixed set of mathematical rules, known as an algorithm, but the precise way in which the data is transformed in each of these two operations depends on a key.

An important principle of modern cryptography is that the algorithms used in any cryptosystem should be publicly known. Only then is it possible for experts to analyse the system and verify its resistance to all known cryptanalytic attacks, so that users may have confidence in it. In other words, the security of any encrypted data should rely solely on the secrecy of the decryption key, and not on any hidden encryption or decryption algorithms.

In the cryptographic community, dubious encryption software is commonly called 'snake oil', a term which originated from quack medicine peddled by travelling salesmen. Snake oil includes software for which the source code is not made publicly available, or for which the cryptographic algorithms have not been rigorously tested and analysed by expert cryptanalysts.

Those who know little about serious cryptography often assume that a particular encryption method is safe if nobody has cracked it. Cryptographers do not see it that way. As the eminent cryptographer Bruce Schneier put it, "That's actually backwards. In the world of cryptography, we assume something is broken until we have evidence to the contrary." In other words, a cryptosystem must be subjected to serious analysis by experts before it can be trusted.

Ciphers

In modern cryptography the plaintext is represented in a computer file, which is basically a sequence of bits, each having the value 0 or 1. One often speaks of the plaintext as a 'message', but in reality it may be any data that can be represented in a computer, such as an image or sound file.

A cipher is an algorithm for converting one sequence of bits into another of equal length, where the result depends on a key. In a symmetric cipher, the most common type, the same key is used for encryption and decryption. In other words, if a symmetric cipher is applied twice in succession, the original message is recovered.

The details of how modern ciphers work are rather technical mathematically and need not concern us here, but the general scheme of operation of a symmetric cipher is easy to understand (see Figure II).

In general, the key for a cipher is simply a large number. Key lengths are conventionally measured in bits, and most of the well-known strong ciphers have key lengths between 128 and 256 bits (powers of 2 being most common). A cipher is considered 'strong' if extensive analysis by the world's best cryptographers reveals that it is resistant to all known cryptanalytic attacks. In particular, there should be no known attack more efficient than 'brute force', which is to say testing all possible keys to find the one that decrypts a given message.

When brute force is the best known cracking method, it is easy to estimate the strength of a cipher by calculating the time needed to test all possible keys, using existing technology. Consider, for example, a cipher that uses 128-bit keys. This allows a colossal number of possible keys. Suppose, for example, that 10 billion computers are assigned to the task of cracking a particular encrypted message, each capable of testing 10 billion keys per second. Then, if you have a little mathematical ability, you can verify that it would take about 100 billion years to test all possible keys. That's longer than the estimated age of the universe according to modern cosmology, which is about 15 billion years. This is typical of the strength of modern ciphers.

To be fair, on average it would be necessary to run through only half of the keys to find the correct one. But you will probably agree that this is pretty good security!

With each additional bit of a key, the time required to test all keys is doubled. Therefore, even if computers become unimaginably faster in the future, the same degree of security could easily be maintained by moving to larger keys.

Of course, since the security of a message encrypted with a symmetric cipher relies on the secret key that was used to encrypt it, it is of paramount importance to keep that key absolutely secure.

Public-key cryptography

Messages sent over the Internet usually pass through several relaying hosts before reaching their destination. Such messages are analogous to messages sent on a postcard through the postal

system: they can be read by anyone with access to any of the computers through which they pass.

Privacy can be ensured by using encryption. But symmetric ciphers are inadequate for secure communication over the Internet. If two people who cannot meet in person want to communicate securely, how can they exchange a secret key? If they have a secure channel for doing this, they may as well exchange the message itself that way as well.

Public-key cryptography offers a neat solution to this conundrum. In a public-key cryptosystem, each user has a pair of keys: a public key and a secret key. On the basis of some rather clever mathematics, these two keys are constructed in such a way that each reverses the action of the other, but nevertheless there is no known feasible way for anyone to calculate one from a knowledge of the other.

The public key can be publicised widely, in the same way that most people publicise their telephone numbers. In fact, there are 'key servers' on the internet, so that anyone who knows the name and e-mail address of a particular user can look up that user's public key. A message can be encrypted for a particular user by encrypting it with that user's public key. Only that user can decrypt it, because nobody else has access to the corresponding secret key.

A public key is sometimes compared to a padlock. If a public key is like a padlock, then the matching secret key is like the ordinary key that opens the padlock.

This analogy goes even further if the padlock is regarded as the analogue of not only the public key, but also the cryptosystem. There may be only a few popular types of padlock, but each allows millions of possible cuts of keys. There is no loss of security in allowing anyone to see the brand of padlock that is used (or the cryptosystem plus the public key). The security rests entirely on the secrecy of the particular key that opens the padlock (or the secret key in a public-key cryptosystem).

The scheme shown in Figure II is again applicable to public-key cryptography, except that the two keys are different in this case. A public key is used for encryption, and the corresponding secret key for decryption. Just as in the case of symmetric ciphers, these keys consist of large numbers. In practice, the keys are stored in computer files, not remembered by the user. Since the secret key must be protected against unauthorised use, it is stored only in encrypted form, using a symmetric cipher, and the user can 'unlock' it by means of a passphrase whenever the software requires it.

Modern public-key cryptography offers the same degree of security as for symmetric ciphers, as discussed above, provided sufficiently large keys are used. But for technical reasons, public-key cryptography requires larger keys, typically 1024 to 2048 bits, to ensure a similar degree of security.

In this article I have discussed only the general concepts of modern cryptography. The reader will be glad to know that the methods discussed above can be implemented by means of user-friendly software in modern computers, including RISC OS computers. 'Military-grade' security is available to everyone.

In future articles I shall describe the RISC OS software that can be used for strong cryptography. Meanwhile, readers may like to look at the available programs collected on my Web site at **http://web.bham.ac.uk/N.M.Queen/pgp/acorn.html**

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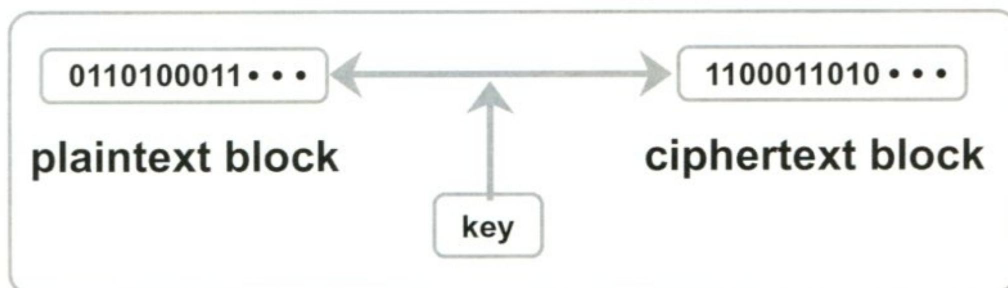


Fig I

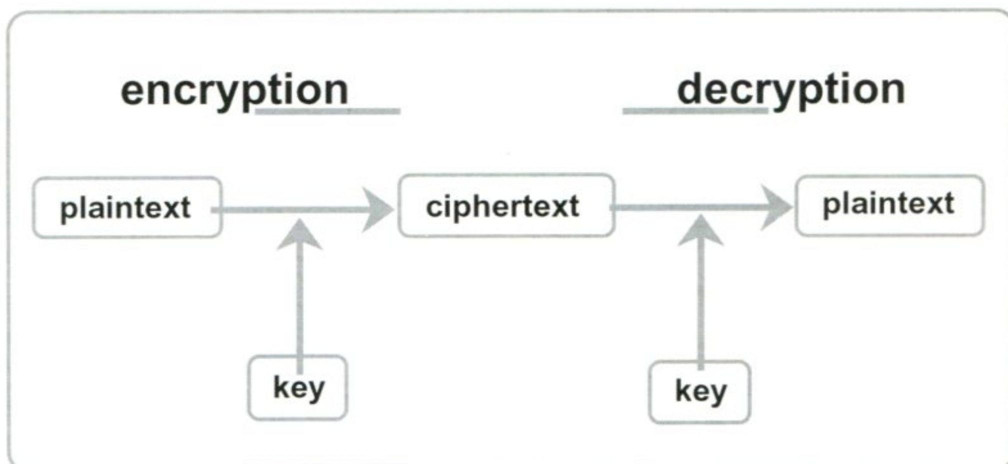


Fig II

Shopping for e-shops

Perhaps you have a good idea for a product but don't want the hassle of creating your own store and running it. E-commerce could still be a viable option for you if you use one of the several services available to set up your own ready-made shop. Building a business from a kit is hardly anything to be ashamed of, look at the number of high-street coffee shop franchises.

Acorn users come up against a specific problem here, though. Many ready-made shop systems, for example the widely used **www.roman.co.uk** require you to install software to maintain and access your site. If you are exclusively operating from an Acorn platform it is not really possible for you to take this option. Luckily there are still several choices, not only for those lone surfers wanting to sell posters to his friends but also for global brand names.

Cafepress



www.cafepress.com

Cafépress is the grandaddy of all the custom shop systems. Starting out in 1999 as a T-shirt printing service for mainly personal Web sites, it then moved into mugs, clocks, mousemats and even knickers. Recently it has expanded into vanity publishing, upload your novel, and it will bind and print it for you.

There are two versions, free and paid-for. The free version is quite workable if you only intend to open a small shop. Simply upload the design, preferably in a GIF format. You could, of course, use JPEGs but the lossy compression will make it look as if your shirt or mug permanently needs a wash. The site will automatically generate pictures of the images onto the products without you needing to lift a finger.



The commission system is fairly simple. There is a base rate for each product you are selling. T-Shirts, for instance, retail at $13.99 (about £8). If you're feeling charitable, you can simply sell them at that rate and not receive any money. Otherwise, you might like to consider upping the price. You receive 95 cents for each dollar that you increase the price, and the money goes into your balance.

However, if you don't make $25 (£15) of commission payments within a quarter, the balance is reset. Essentially, this means you must sell about eight or nine t-shirts a month to get anything back if you only raise it $1 above the base price. This writer doesn't know of anybody who has managed this without a lot of marketing and work.

Cafepress's free services are easy to use but are crippled in a similar way to Shareware. You cannot have more than one design on one product; for instance you're not allowed to have a whole range of stylish clocks or knickers. The amount of power you have over the way your shop looks is limited. You can upgrade your shop for $7/month, which gives you greater control over everything.

The products themselves are extremely good quality. The clothing is screen-printed rather than ironed. You can't have a white design on a black background though, because white is always rendered as transparent and not glossy ink. Cafépress seems to have it in for goths.

There is one obvious disadvantage to Cafépress. It's in America, and everything is in dollars, and you have to consider shipping on top of the cost of the products. A simple T-Shirt can therefore work out about £16, with only about 70p of that going to you. There was also a great deal of controversy and concern over to whom intellectual property of the uploaded images belongs, but Cafépress themselves seem to have cleared it all up by issuing new terms and conditions.

Although Cafépress's product base is expanding all the time, you are still a little bit limited in what you can sell if you use them. If your site has a worldwide view and most of your customers are expected to come from America, Cafépress is an extremely good option.

http://www.cafepress.com/orisinal/

Best for: Personal Web pages and blogs, amateurs, American markets

Make My Megastore



www.makemymegastore.co.uk

Make My Megastore has a wide range of products, from mobile phone covers, through the obligatory T-shirts, to teddy bears, and like Cafépress has free and paid-for sections. Make My Megastore, however, is based in the UK.

That isn't the only way in which Make My Megastore differs from Cafépress. The free part of the store basically operates like an e-mail account in that you have to log in to buy items. You can then upload pictures to put on products: JPEGs only, however, which makes any 'cartoon-style' GIF images or monochrome designs slightly out of the question if you are looking for good fidelity.

The products are slightly more reasonable than its distant American cousin and, of course, being UK-based you do not need to worry about international shipping costs. But the only feasible way you could use a free service to offer products as part of your Web site is to publish a username and password and hope that surfers don't delete your files. And then you wouldn't be making any money from this. Make My Megastore may be missing a trick here.

The paid-for version requires you to contact them and set up a dialogue with their site so they can create a company site based on your needs. You get commission on the products too, although this needs to be negotiated. Their Web sites are extremely easy to use, and they have a good team of designers. One interesting idea of theirs is that if you have a high-street presence, you can put your site on computers inside your shop so people can walk into your store and buy things if they don't want to talk to a shop assistant or cashier. Nice, but slightly defeats the point of e-commerce.

One problem with Make My Mega Store, for older RISC OS browsers, is that the designers have designed it with Flash, for no apparent reason.

http://o2.makemymegastore.com/

Best for: One off purchases, fan sites



Global Web Store



www.globalwebstore.co.uk

You will need to open an Internet merchant account for this one, but that is practically all the technical ability you need. Entirely based online, the Global Web Store allows you to smoothly set up, run, change and maintain your customers. It has been designed in mind of those who don't have the time or the ability to set up their own store and link it into their merchant accounts, but nevertheless it is extremely powerful.

The design of the shop you are given remains static. You have a front page and several category pages in which you can place your products. This may be frustrating to some who want to have flexibility, but this has been done very deliberately. "If customers can get to your products simply, they will buy them," says James Dobson, MD of Global Web Store. The database-driven nature of the site is quite attractive to many of Global Web Store's customers, particularly to those who deal with catalogues or information. "More than half of our clients just use the service to create a company Web site, without any e-commerce."

You can also monitor stock levels, upload pictures of your products and change images on the front of your site. None of your products are confined to one part of your site, as you can cross-index them. One particular feature is that you can select whether or not your products are end-of-line, that is if stocks run out they will never be replenished. The product will then be removed from view on the site.

The administrative tools are compatible with most browsers, most of the workings of the site are server-side, and the software continues to be developed. The ability to contact customers through SMS, to let them know when orders have been despatched, will have been added by time of going to press. If you have any particular requirements for your site, the team of six behind the site will try to make room for them. They will also tailor the mechanism for your banking needs.

Global Web Store is not really designed for bloggers hoping to flog a few t-shirts. This is for serious businesses only, as the software requires investment. You can either pay a one-off charge of £1,500 or hire the site with a price based on how many products you hold. Everything, including a secure server to host the site and customer support, is included.



www.zebramenswear.co.uk

Best for: Large, established companies. Individuals willing to invest capital, and those confident enough they have a big seller.

Summing up

These are just three of the huge numbers of e-commerce shops available. Many ISPs have their own shop systems, or will be able suggest free ones that will be compatible with their set-ups.

When it comes down to it it's a case of getting what you pay for, and deciding what it is you are really after. If you simply want to brand products but not actually have any stock, the Cafepress model is what you need.

If you are investing in real stock, "real" e-shops are what you are going to need. They take real money but if you are working with your own products you should have some real money to invest.

One word of warning though, building a better mousetrap will not have the world beating a path to your door. E-shops require promotion just like any other business and in a web-based world with tens of thousands of competitors make sure you're putting some money into that too.

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Not M$

You may have noticed an advert with the Web address "www.not.ms" gracing the pages of Acorn User in recent months. Perhaps its significance passed you by, or perhaps you realised its meaning but didn't bother to actually try it out. You can, it really works.

It leads to the web site of a company called Andrews and Arnold which started in telecoms, but then moved to supplying ISDN equipment and became an Internet Service Provider specialising in ISDN equipment and telecommunications solutions for small to medium sized businesses, including e-mail servers and Internet access.

AAISP (as the ISP part of the company is called) provides a real Internet connection with as many real public IP addresses as you need, reverse DNS, IP6, and UK domain with Web space and POP3 or SMTP mail as you might need using Web-based configuration.

With a domain like **www.not.ms** as you might expect, the company does not assume you're using PCs and is as happy dealing with Macs, Linux and RISC OS.

Andrews & Arnold Ltd run training courses on various subjects. Apart from courses on the systems they supply they also do more general training as well such as a one day IP course aimed at IT staff and people interested in networking. The main objective is to provide a more detailed understanding of the actual operation of IP protocols covering subjects such as: the format of IP, IP6, and MAC addresses and subnet masks; Ethernet networks (hubs, switches, cables, 10/100/1000, crossover); MAC addresses and ARPs; Subnets and subnet masks; Basic routing and gateways; Static routes, and return paths; and much more besides.

A&A is run by the Rev Adrian Kennard who has a long history in the computer market and was a BBC Micro and Archimedes user himself. We managed to grab a little time with him and ask him a little bit about himself and the company:

AU: How (and when) did you get into computers?

AK: That was at Secondary school, mine was one of the very first to offer any sort of computing lessons.

AU: What interesting computers have you owned in the past?

AK: The ones that stand out are the TRS80, BBC Micro, Archimedes, Nascom, and various others... I have even built some myself as well.

AU: When (and why) did you decide to run an ISP company?

AK: It started as a spin off from the telephone system and routers we were selling. We were dealing with a lot of companies and they wanted to know who to use as an ISDN dial-up ISP, it was an obvious opening for us for additional business so we set one up.

We have expanded from there, getting into ADSL with one of the very first commercial ADSL services in the country using BT links.

With the advent of the FireBrick, three years ago, and writing a complete TCP/IP stack from drivers through to Web server, I think we have a pretty good understanding of Internet protocols.

AU: A+A is ranked as one of the best ISPs in the country, why do you think that is?

AK: Attitude! Honesty; No nonsense tech support: Trying to do things properly; Being pro-active, for example, we ping every line every second to track any loss and latency, and correlate results so we can report to BT's core networking teams before any customers even notice a fault; Forward thinking (about 10% of our customers already have an IP6 assignment). Providing a quality "real" Internet service that does what it says on the tin!



AU: You own a URL of **www.not.ms**, does that mean you have no Windows PCs in your business?

AK: We also have **sod.ms**. We generally use Linux machines. However, we do maintain a variety of systems so that we can support our customers better. My own machine uses Linux and my e-mail is sent over IP6.

AU: How do you see the Internet market moving in the future?

AK: Steadily expanding in to the mass market for broadband. I am sure there will be more and more "shrink wrapped" services that are aimed specifically at the novice/home user, whereas we aim to continue to provide an unfiltered "real" internet connection that can be used for more than just Web pages and E-mail.

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USB products

With USB now taking serious hold in the RISC OS market it is nice to be able to look at the various peripherals we can now plug in.

Probably the products uppermost in the minds of most of us is storage devices. Let's get some mega-storage devices and plug them in.

Bluntly it's not that simple. Firstly, the Simtec card has generic mass storage drivers and STD will try to develop drivers for other devices, see comments below. We'll cover that in the next issue.

The Iyonix also has generic drivers and if you have all the updates all you have to do is plug-in a mass storage device and up it pops on the iconbar. Actually I could really do with something like having the icon flash for a bit because it is so quick and so subtle that I sometimes don't spot it.

But the complications go further than that. As everyone knows USB is supposed to provide plug'n'play connectivity. Plug in your device; the software recognises the type; sets up the appropriate driver; and you are off. Unfortunately some manufacturers don't like this, so instead they give their devices a mass storage class (for example) and then do something else which means only their software will read the device. Worse than that the specification isn't precise so even one supposed to be correct might not work.

But there is more, if you have a mass storage device of less than 2Gb size you are okay, because the DOSFS software can handle anything under that. But it's really easy to get devices with 10Gb, 20Gb, even 80Gb or more. These may not work, a priority should be given to upgrading DOSFS because that one simple fix should increase the available USB devices dramatically.

As a result of the four products that I wanted to look at this month, I have only one that is of direct use on RISC OS, and one which you should just get anyway because it's really cool.

Of course if you've decided to get one of the new virtual Acorn machines that are popping up all over the USB limitation doesn't exist because you can just use the PC to read the data and then transfer it to the Acorn side.

MagicStar

The MagicStar MP3 player is one of these little pen drives which has the software to play MP3 files that are stored on it. It comes with a short USB extension lead so it can be plugged in easily; it's charged via the USB and that gives you plenty of play time; all the play controls are on a single "play-pause-stop-fast forward-next track-last track" control. There is also a manual lock to stop files being overwritten.

On the Iyonix it pops up as an extra drive when plugged in and you can drag and drop files in and out as you would expect. Creating MP3 files on the Iyonix can be achieved simply by using the bundled CDBurnLite to extract audio tracks as WAV files and then grabbing the public domain CDrip software off the Web.

We had the 64Mb version to play with which is only for one album's worth of music but, according to my daughter, it is excellent and she is the envy of her friends.

Archos AV340



This is where it would have been really cool if DOSFS could have handled more than 2Gb. This little unit takes the personal MP3 player concept and turns it into the personal Video player concept. Rather than having 64Mb this one weighs in with a 40Gb storage space.

The unit itself is smaller than a personal CD player though a bit heavier and not surprisingly because this must be absolutely jam-packed with electronics, LCD screen and batteries.

The LCD screen which takes up one side of the unit measures about 7cm by 5cm with a set of six controls down the side. The first pair of buttons are Play/Pause/Enter/On and Stop/Escape/Off buttons. The middle "button" is actually a tiny joystick with a click-to-select as well. Below that are three almost alien-style buttons which are used to select the three menu options that are usually available at the bottom of the screen. Sockets for the device include a mini-USB, serial, audio/SPDIF and SCART so you can plug it into multiple video sources.

On start up there are nine icons displayed on the screen: Photo, Music, Video, AudioCorder, Browser, Setup, VideoCorder, CamCorder and Camera.

The first three are simply folders containing the appropriate files; the "Corders" are for recording from different sources: Audio and the various video inputs. The camera option is for reading digital camera images.

The browser option allows you to wander around the directory structure while setup lets you alter audio playback options, how songs are to be played (in order, looped, repeat and so on). You can set the clock, alter the TV-out format, language modify the power saving options and other system variables.

As you may have gathered this unit is capable of digitising video input, which it encodes into MPEG4 files. No special drivers are needed to attach it to a computer, it behaves as a completely standard hard disk unit when attached by USB (it just shows a "USB active" message). So all we need, in order to have a video digitiser for RISC OS, is have an updated version of DOSFS.

Anyway this is a great toy and I don't want to give it back but I have to. If you want one for Christmas, go to **www.archos.com**

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Other training

As any decent dictator will tell you, a vital part of achieving world domination is educating as many of your subjects as possible about your systems and your philosophies, and making detailed knowledge of them completely crucial to getting anywhere in your career. This is exactly why Microsoft Certified Training is so important.

You may not like it, but Microsoft is not going away. And if you want to get anywhere in a career in IT, you're going to have to swallow your pride and click on a few Start buttons. There are over a hundred Microsoft Certified Training Centres in the UK, all offering a bewildering variety of courses from Access to XML, at all levels from very basic to very high.

Microsoft also offer professional MCP qualifications, recognised across the world. Training centres are classified according to quality too. Those centres that Microsoft deem worthy are classified as Gold. These "elite" proudly display their Gold certification.

There are almost as many ways of learning as there are courses. Microsoft have books and CD-ROMs, as well as online courses. An exam is set at the end of each course to test competency. Classroom learning remains the tried and tested way of achieving certification and the one which most companies and individuals use.

According to Microsoft, prices are "determined by our premier training partners, and vary worldwide." In the UK, though, there is not as much regional variation in cost as one would expect. Many large Microsoft Certified Training companies, such as Parity Training and Azlan, have centres all over the country which provide equivalent courses which cost the same in, for example, Manchester as in London.

Parity's Microsoft Certified course in Administrating SQL, for instance, will usually cost £1,495+VAT for a week-long, tutor-led course wherever you are in the UK. Sometimes the price will dip to £1,350+VAT, or rise to £1,845+VAT, depending on the company and the extra support they give. As a rule of thumb, an employer should allocate £1,500+VAT per employee for a week-long course.

This is all very well if you are employed in a company which is willing to train you. Things can get difficult for those who want a change of career or need to upgrade their skills with no help from their employer. For instance, some parts of IBM currently have no formal training schemes available to staff due to budgetary constraints, with the bosses preferring to leave the training of newer staff to their colleagues rather than professional teachers.

Most training companies charge individuals the same rates as they charge businesses. IT changes rapidly, and those who don't keep up-to-date will find themselves as much of a museum piece as an x86 chip. People become unemployed, cannot find the cash to continually refresh their skills, and then find themselves unemployable. Furthermore, many courses take place over blocks of one week or a month, and finding the time off work or jobhunting is often impossible. Effective training is simply not practical for many people.

Luckily, this could all be about to change with a pioneering scheme in Edinburgh. New Horizons Scotland has imported, from Holland, an idea that seems so obvious and workable that it is a shock that nobody has tried it before. Lindsey Malone explains: "Although we do run the week-long courses, we were finding more and more that people don't find them to be convenient. So we started a walk-in system.

"You buy vouchers in advance, which are valid for a year. You literally walk in and learn, and you take the course at your own pace. We always have an MCT in the room to give tuition and to answer questions, and you take the assessment when you are ready. It takes the best parts of learning online and being in the classroom environment.

"On the MCSA and MCSE, we have two computers per student so each student can run and test their own networks. We hold the walk-ins in the evenings and people find them more flexible. And if you need to cancel a session, you can do it just hours in advance with no penalties."

Voucher prices vary depending on how much training and time you need, but the general cost is considerably less for the individual. But there are many more ways of making the costs less prohibitive if you are on your own and nowhere near Scotland.

Several companies, such as Parity Training, give discounts to individuals of up to 40% if they have attended a Microsoft Event Roadshow. At the time of going to press, there were two scheduled, one in Bristol and one in Reading. If you are attending either show, you will be given a code to use at the time of booking to claim your discount. The offer is only valid for courses booked by the end of the year that run until 31st March, but is open to both individuals and businesses.

Funding is also available in many circumstances. MTC in Sunderland, as well as offering bulk corporate discounts for large groups, helps individuals look for ways of paying for at least part of their courses through government programmes. The Learning and Skills Council, for instance, will pay for 40% of your course under some conditions, out of its total annual budget of £8bn.

ExecuTrain SW, based in Exeter, are running a scheme in partnership with the European Social Fund, which has £60m available for training. The ESF will back a strictly limited number of places for companies who wish to train up an individual as an on-site 'IT Expert'. There are different initiatives for many different situations, and they are always worth asking about.

If you are looking for employment with a company which is willing to train staff, the standard to look out for is the Investor in People scheme. This was set up in 1993 to encourage companies to grow the skills of their staff and provide and pay for training courses to develop employees. To display the standard, a company must regularly assess the training needs of its staff, plan and budget for it and evaluate its effectiveness. It is a sure sign that a company will take your career development seriously.

Most of the time people do find IT and business training beneficial. "I've been on countless Microsoft Certified courses," says Tanj Gosal, a technician at ITNet. "They've all been really helpful." Yet for whatever reason, sometimes training courses benefit neither employer nor student. Alan Thomas, operations

manager at a logistical removal equipment firm, sent three employees on an Introduction to Excel course as part of the Investor in People scheme: "I'm afraid it wasn't that useful. Two people left six months afterwards. The other one who went on the course realised that he didn't need Excel to carry out his job."

The same is true for large companies. One person working for an international financial information organisation saw everybody else in his department sent on a Microsoft Certified course in C++: "I already happened to be the most experienced in the department, so there was no course for me. They trained for five days, at £1,500 per head. But overall, they only got a grounding in the subject. And then one of our team came back and said 'C++ is just like JavaScript, right?' Which doesn't really speak very highly for that course..."

Perhaps Microsoft Certified Training centres are not as homogenous as Microsoft would like them to be. But the Gold standard is always a very good indication of quality, as well as word of mouth.

Glossary

Microsoft uses various acronyms and terms to describe their courses, trainers and certificates. Here is a guide to some of the most important ones.

MCDST Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician: Troubleshooting and making the most of the Windows operating system and applications. Includes a strong customer service perspective.

MCSA Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator: The maintenance and administration of Windows-based network platforms.

MCSE Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer: This differs from the MCSA in that, rather than administration, it concentrates on the creation and infrastructure of networks and stand-alone systems. There is also the option to specialise in security.

MCT Microsoft Certified Trainer: A person who is qualified to teach a Microsoft Certified course. An MCT will have taken exams and gone through rigorous assessment, as well as being an MCP.

MCP Microsoft Certified Professional is an individual who has completed a Microsoft Certified course. According to Microsoft, MCPs earn on average 11% more than people in equivalent jobs who have not taken a course.

CTEC Centre for Technology is an accredited college which has been authorised by Microsoft to run Certified courses. Will have at least one MCT working there.

SME Small to Medium Enterprise, an SME is one that employs less than 250 people and an annual turnover of less than £28 million. Various funding initiatives exist to help smaller companies train their staff and cover for them while they are away.

Contact addresses

Parity Training, Wimbledon Bridge, 1 Hartfield Road, Wimbledon SW19 3RU. Tel: 0800 656 100

New Horizons Scotland, 22 Logie Mill, Beaverbank Office Park, Edinburgh EH7 4HG. Tel: 0131 557 7000
ExecuTrain SW. Tel: 0117 909 8400
MTC. Tel: 0191 515 3355

Investors in People

Investors in People is the national Standard which sets out a level of good practice for training and development of people to achieve business goals. The Standard was developed during 1990 by the National Training Task Force in partnership with leading national businesses, personnel, professional and employee organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD).

The Standard provides a national framework for improving business performance and competitiveness, through a planned approach to setting and communicating business objectives and developing people to meet these objectives.

The Investors in People Standard is based on four key principles:

- Commitment to invest in people to achieve business goals
- Planning how skills, individuals and teams are to be developed to achieve these goals
- Taking action to develop and use necessary skills in a well-defined and continuing programme directly tied to business objectives
- Evaluating outcomes of training and development for individuals' progress towards goals, the value achieved and future needs.

Being recognised as an "Investor in People" involves a number of steps:

Understanding the Standard and it's strategic implications for your organisation; Undertaking a review against the Standard to identify any gaps in current practice; Making the commitment to meet the Standard and communicating that commitment to all members of staff; Planning and taking action, to bring about change; Bringing together the evidence for assessment against the Standard; Achievement or recognition as an Investor in People.

See **www.iipuk.gov.uk**

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Guildford Show Report

This year's Acorn South East show, organised by SASAUG (Surrey and Sussex Acorn User Group) at Guildford College of Technology, can be summed up by what people have to say about it:

"The difference between having a PC and an Acorn," says one punter at the SASAUG South East Show, "is that when you have a problem with PC software, you call customer services, you wait on the phone, and when the person answers the phone they don't have a clue what you're talking about and it's cost you ten quid. When you have a problem with Acorn software, not that it happens much, you e-mail or phone the author and he sorts it for you." Or, of course, you go to the show and you talk to the author yourself.

On this day, Oregano's stand was a case in point. The publisher very patiently dealt with a stream of queries, questions, problems and rants: "Why have you given us an option that doesn't exist? It wasn't greyed out!" "Why are the colours on the printer always so wrong?" Oregano 2, of course, is the long-awaited product of the feedback and the gripes.

All the code has been overhauled, and among other things there is now support for Flash 4.0. "It's a more rounded and complete product, although we welcome everybody's suggestions," say Castle. Problems with banking sites and secure servers have also been fixed.

One Acorn owner who had come from Eastbourne to Guildford to speak to the Oregano team, originally had to log-on with Explorer running off a PC card to pay his bills, not a very satisfactory way of doing it. Work continues apace, most importantly with a fuller and more detailed implementation of CSS, which many web sites use for display and layout. It will be ready "probably in about three or four months." However, a good number of people are still awaiting a comprehensive manual for Oregano.

A free trial version is available for download from **www.castle.org.uk/oregano/** and everything is fully operational apart from the print and save functions. Inevitably, a dialogue box keeps reminding you to upgrade every ten minutes or so of surfing.

You might have overheard the odd hairdrier being aimed at the programmers, but there were no real earthquakes in the Acorn landscape this year. The main advances were updates, modifications and tweaks. RISC OS 4.40 was launched, which is "essentially the same as 4.37 but in ROM. It is aimed at people with older computers who want an easy way to upgrade."

Castle's presentation was first in the theatre, showing off a shiny new Iyonix with 2048x1536x16m display, a low power ARM processor with two small fans, USB connectivity and backwards compatibility with older Acorn podules. In fact, the USB connectivity was so successful that it immediately connected to an Olympus camera with no extra software and no problems transferring data.



Two different kinds of machine were on offer. A lower spec with 80 GB HD and 128 MB RAM would set you back £1,299 while a somewhat higher spec machine, with a 120 GB HD and 200 MB RAM cost £1,399. Monitors were on special offer at the show, and were given away with each purchase, sent free to your home address. Free software includes Messenger Lite, Oregano 2, Fireworkz, and also a top-of-the-range Epson scanner.

Last year's question and answer sessions became rather heated in places, although arguably this may have been because the show took place in half the amount of space with twice the attendance. In contrast to last year and indeed some of this year's stands, things seemed a bit more muted in this year's theatre.

Replying to one question about the limitations of print quality with the printer drivers installed on the Iyonix system, Castle said that they were concentrating more on getting a releasable machine on the market. People should look to third parties if they want any immediate updates.

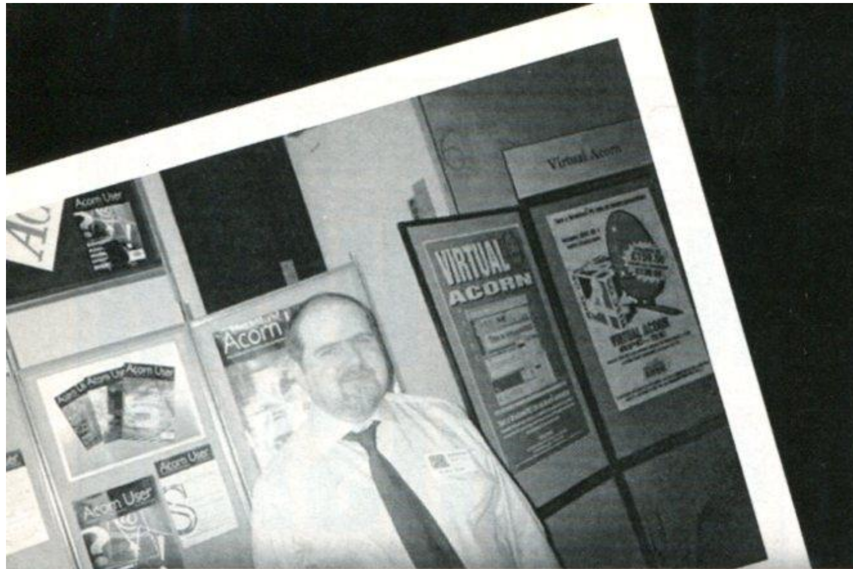


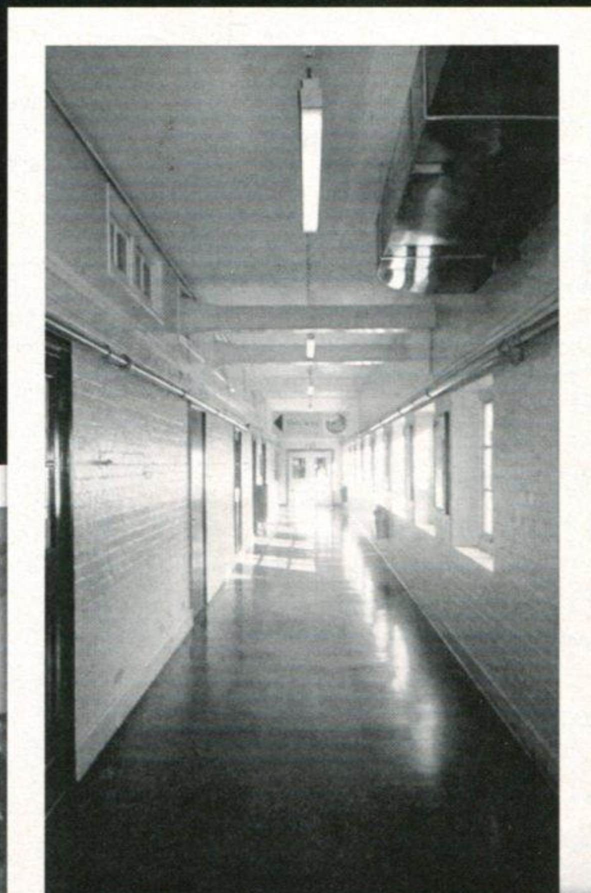
It might seem harsh, but this is another way in which Acorns differ from PCs. If your system is missing something, you or somebody you know can write an application to improve the situation. You don't have to download expensive American Shareware with a technical support number in California.

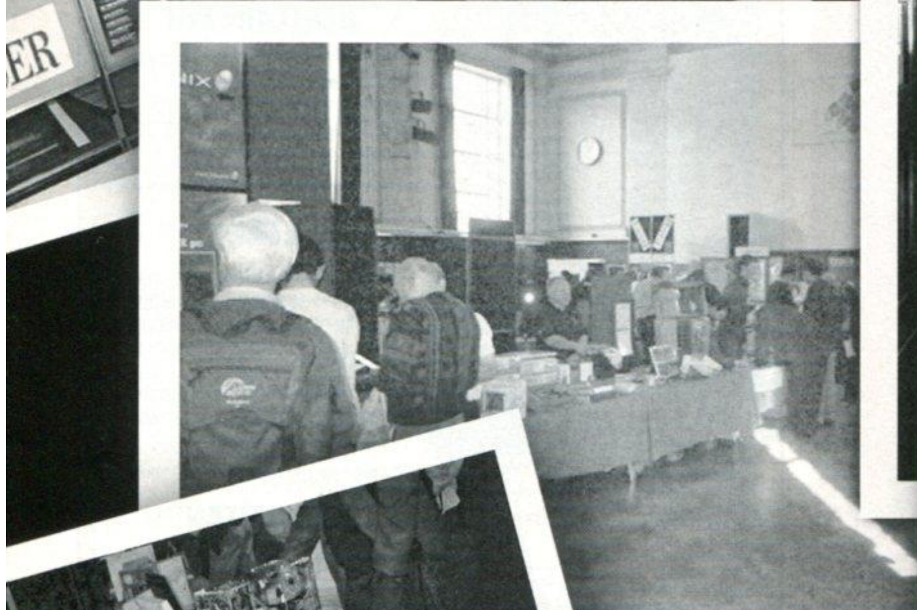
Another question dealt with the development of RISC OS 5. Will it become entirely structured around Select features? Castle replied that some technical issues still needed to be resolved, but it should be technically possible. They added: "RISC OS has moved on considerably from where it was in 1999, and we are very keen to keep our software as compact as we possibly can, keeping the smallest amount of memory and offering the smallest priced product." Good to see RISC OS getting smaller as Windows gets more bloated. Then there were some issues with older programs, notably the one-time 'killer app' music score creator Sibelius. It runs in a special screen mode, and the Iyonix doesn't support it. Castle promised to look at that issue immediately.

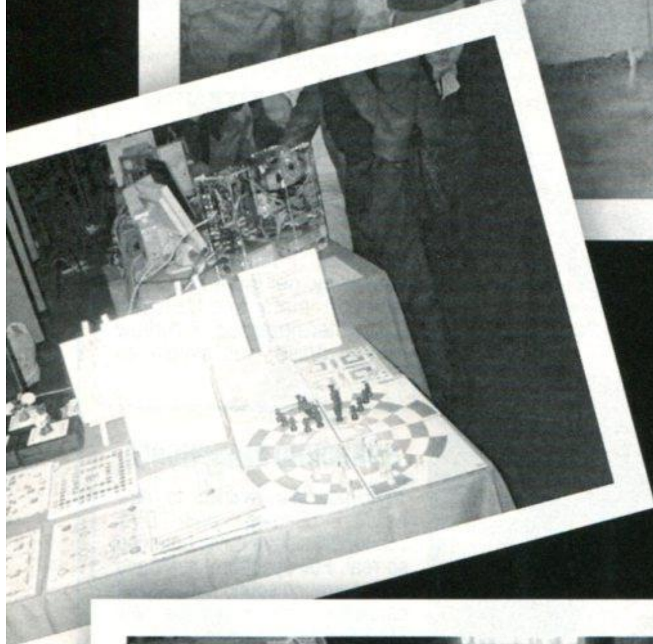


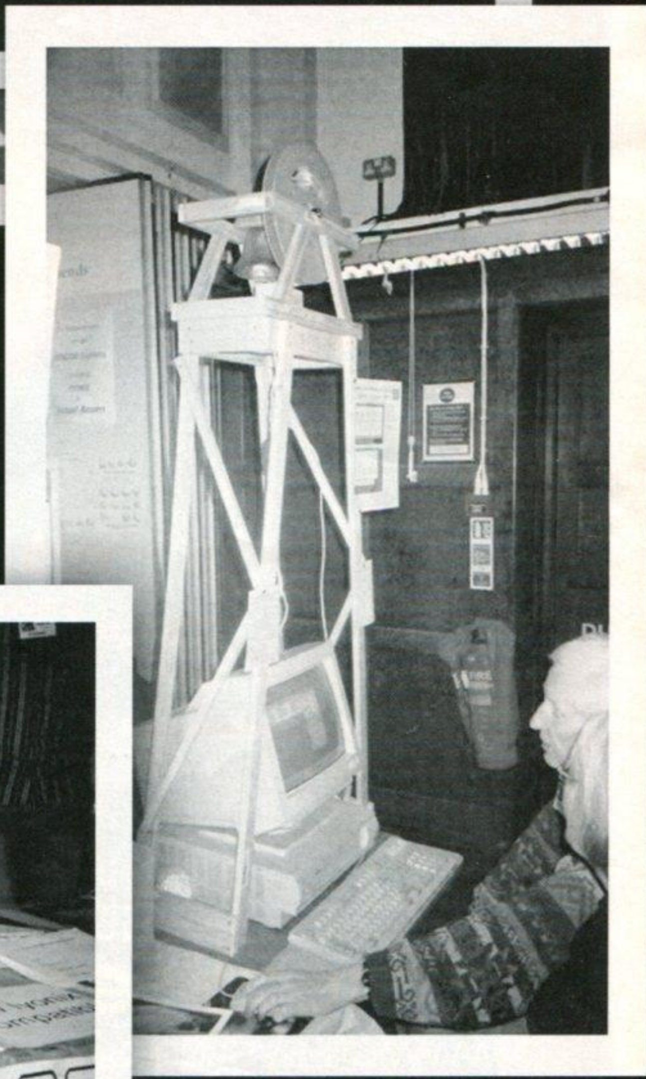
Of course, advances in technology tend

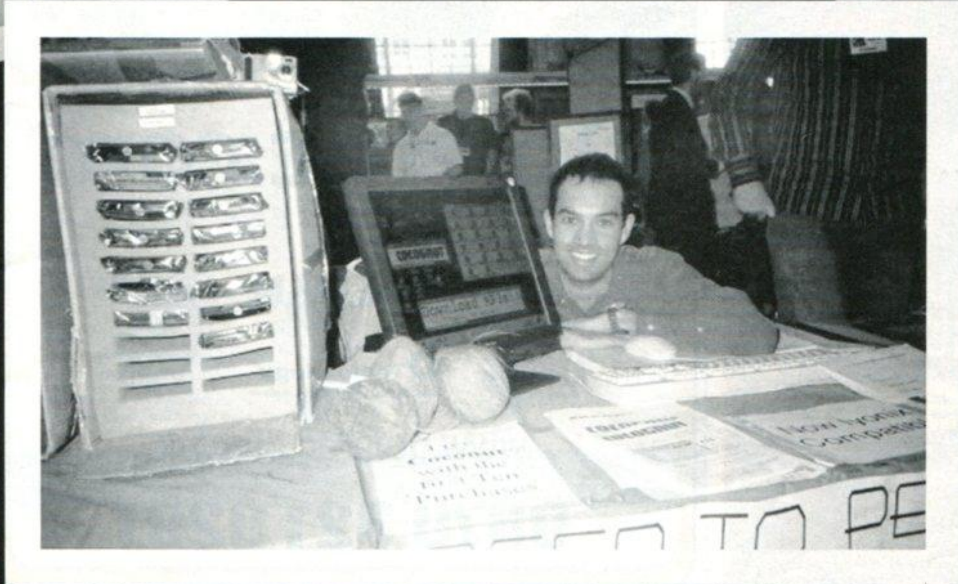

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RISCube Computers



They're Small. They're Powerful.
They run RISC OS
(and WindowsXP). 'Nuf said.

This page is yellow, so that you can't say you didn't see it!

*Definition: **Normal Computer***
Beige box, often in tower format, around 2 foot tall.
Depending on make/model likely to do a reasonable impression of a small jet taking off
May be seen in a "desktop" configuration, still beige, still about 2 foot wide.
Location: Forcibly stored in offices or back bedrooms, where they cannot frighten children or small animals

*Definition: **RISCube***
About the size of a stout shoebox
Brushed aluminum look, not out of place next to VCR, TV or Hifi.   Low noise due to innovative cooling
Location: Anywhere you like! Easily portable around the house or to/from work, due to small size and low weight

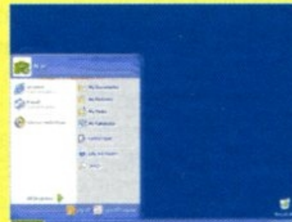
Now that the formalities are over with, let us introduce you to your new friend. The systems have been designed to offer high levels of performance yet be small, unobtrusive and attractive. Amazingly, you can enjoy style and small size, while still having the kind of cutting edge speed that would make a teenage gamer drool!

RISCube machines are primarily designed to run two operating systems - RISC OS 4.02, and WindowsXP. Both operating systems are supplied in their entirety to ensure compatibility and reliability.



RISC OS 4.02





WindowsXP



Best of Both Worlds

When you turn a RISCube on, you have a choice - RISC OS or Windows. If you select the RISC OS option, you boot straight into the RISC OS desktop, ready to run your software at StrongArm speeds and beyond!

But of course, sometimes you may wish to boot into Windows. Perhaps your kids have games which only work on Windows, or you need to use special services which aren't RISC OS compatible. It's like having two complete computer systems, but for the price of one!

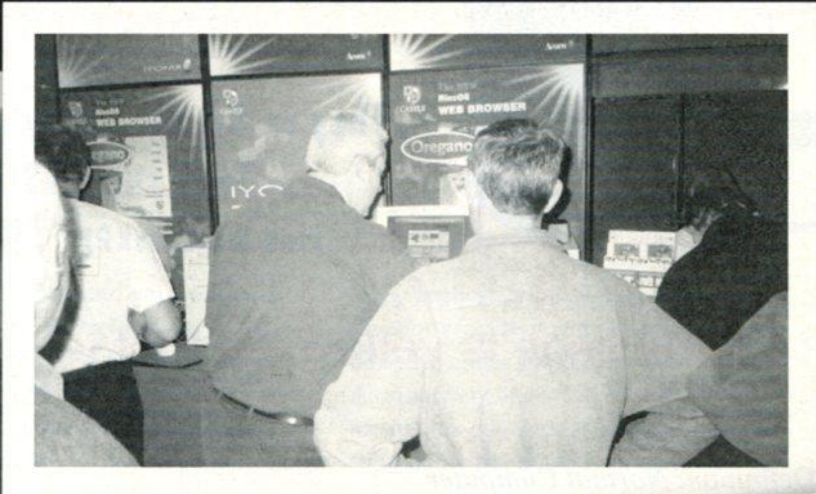
All machines come with networking as standard, plus 5.1 surround sound, USB/Firewire etc. Each machine is hand-built, and pre-configured to order. Latest drivers are installed, and rigorous testing is applied to ensure it performs to its best.

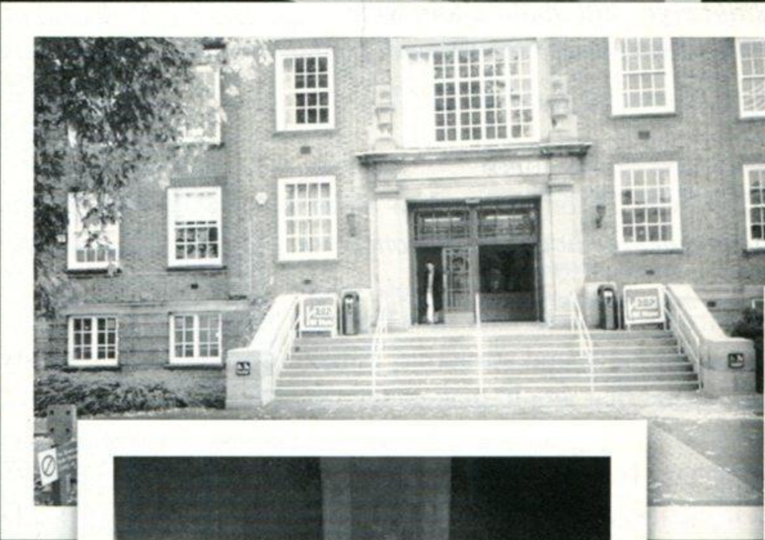
Prices start at £699 Including VAT and UK delivery!

Call us on (+44) 01925 755043 or go to http://www.rcomp.co.uk/ to take the next step...

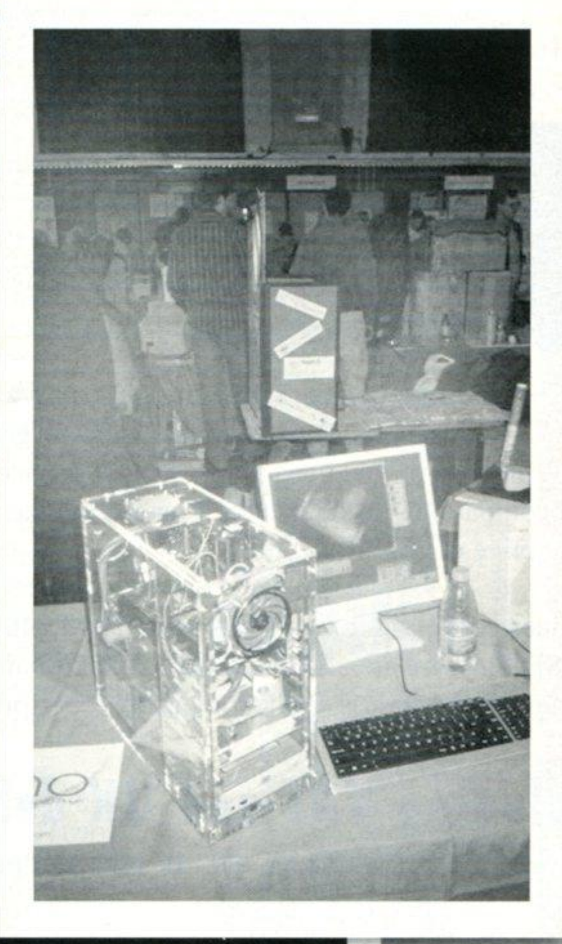
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E-mail: rci@rcomp.co.uk or check out http://www.rcomp.co.uk/
Phone: (+44) (0)1925 755043   Fax: (+44) (0)1925 757377

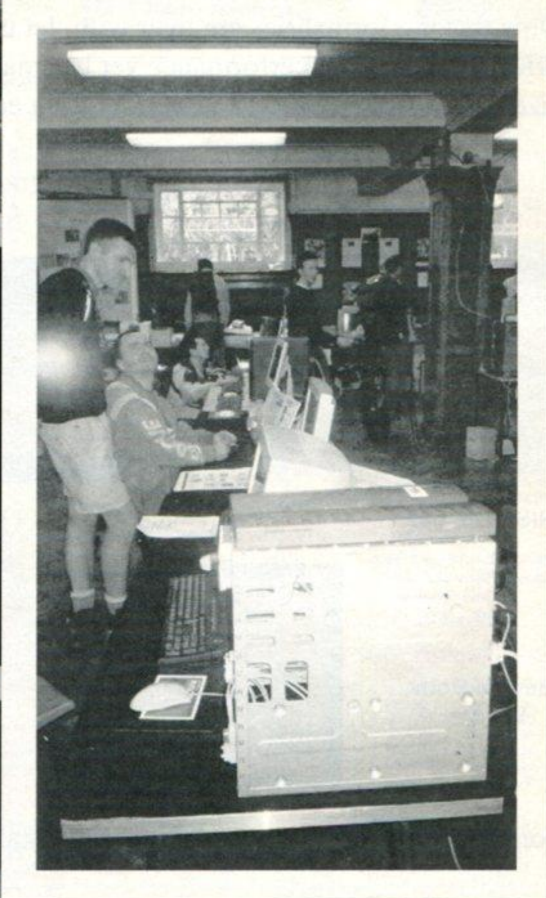



WEB BROWSER
WEB BROWSER
Oregano





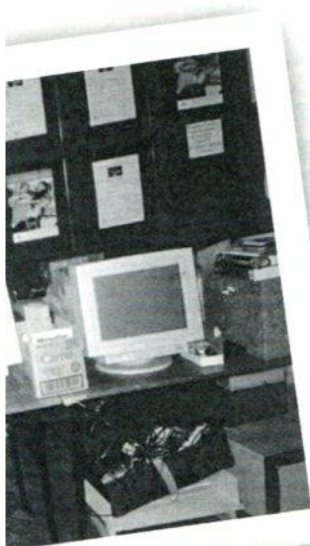






to cause some problems with backwards compatibility. One very good example of a third party running to the rescue also on show was Aemulor, by Neil Spellings and Adrian Lees, the 26-bit emulator for the Iyonix PC. Many older programs use 26-bit machine code, such as those written in compiled C or BASIC programs with assembly code in.

One such program demonstrated on the Aemulor stand was Personal Accounts 4. If you attempt to run this program on an Iyonix, it crashes with an address exception. But if you drag it to Aemulor on the iconbar, it runs perfectly. There was no need to have a separate window; it just runs in the desktop like a normal program, and interacts perfectly with other programs.



Neil Spellings also brought along his transparent Iyonix. It's interesting seeing inside one, there is much more space in there than you would think. "The fans are just for decoration," he explains. "The back one is lit up with blue LEDs and the front one is a neon element." But you won't be seeing it being mass-produced in China for PC World as because the casing is perspex and not metal, there's no electrical shielding, and you would run a significant risk of irradiating your household pets.

Another emulator came in the polished form of the Unix Porting Project. This slick application by Peter Naulls runs Unix software in a window on the desktop. Anything that runs in X appears in a window, magically with the X GUI inside. "It's potentially useful to everybody," says Peter Naulls. "There are literally thousands of programs available on Unix systems." You subscribe to the service monthly, and if there are any programs that don't work which you need to be converted he will get to work on doing it for you.

There was a lot of other software on show. Cocognut, developed by BBS star Marc Warne, is an Acorn P2P client in much the same way as KaZaa but without the intrusive spyware and pop-up advertising. Large files can be transferred over the Gnutella (alternative to KaZaa) network with ease through a straightforward interface. It integrates easy with Marcel, the Internet Suite and all of the other methods of connection. If you bought it at the show, Marc gave you a real coconut to take home. Who said Guildford wasn't an exotic, palm-fringed paradise?

APDL/4th Dimension was clearing out their attic, and demonstrating their RSI-proof keyboard with trapezoid keys and a left-handed optical mouse. Both of them were wireless. Next door Aaron Timbrell was doing a roaring trade in the latest version of his Virtual Risc PC software.

Another clearout stall was the one organised by SASAUG themselves. This featured jewels like Snapper for the Acorn Electron, the RISC OS 2 PRMs, countless old AU cover discs and that four colour plotter you've always been hankering for. All proceeds from the sales, brought in by SASAUG members and by other users at the show, went to CHASE, the children's health charity.

A lot of the software on offer at this show, through nobody's fault, is basically designed to make services available for PC users run on Acorns. It was therefore refreshing to see a couple of exhibits which offered goodies exclusive to the Acorn world.

Fortran Friends had a wooden bell tower on top of their Risc PC. They were demonstrating the campanology (bell-ringing) programs that he and his company had developed. The bell didn't have a clapper inside; instead, there was an infrared sensor next to it. "There is a light source, a reflector strip, and when the bell makes a pass it crosses the light and a signal is sent down to the computer, which rings the bell."

The software included over seventy different bell-ringing combinations for the novice campanologist to practise, and has appeared to rave reviews in several bell-ringing publications. John hoped that it would both help to save some of the older church bells from wear and tear; although "a well maintained bell shouldn't be damaged when it's rung." It might also encourage people to become interested in bell-ringing and its simple rules that build into complex patterns of music. "People aren't ringing bells, as you have to go out in the evenings to do it. But with this I can ring away for all the time I want."

The Electronic Font Foundry have been a fixture at Acorn shows for almost as long as they have been going. Edward Detyna was selling CD-ROMs of high quality versions of every single font imaginable. There are over 1000 in total.

A font was recently created at a leading US university that is supposed to be completely legible to those with dyslexia. "That font was a Polish reading font," says Edward Detyna. "I found it in the 1990s. We have been doing research about learning and dyslexia since 1993, and we have used school children for testing.

A lot of modern fonts have letters that are identical, mirror images, such as 'b' and 'd'. If the children were familiar with the font, they would read quickly but with mistakes. But if the children did not know the font but if every single letter was a different shape, they got it all right. So for accuracy, rather than speed, that font was better." It seems Acorn owners have always been pioneers.

Ian Chamberlain of IC Systems, who was marketing WebWonder, an easy-to-use web designer and developer with everything imaginable included, had a good show: "It's been quite successful, but doesn't seem as busy as last year." He stresses that his Artworks 2 manuals are available even after the show.

It is good to see a community where everybody talks to one another and active feedback and participation is encouraged. "I continue to buy things here because I want to keep supporting RISC OS," explains one man who attended the show. So if people do come up to you and tell you exactly what is wrong with your program point by point, they are only showing an active interest. Judging by the number of people queuing to give their opinions, suggestions, comments and general whinges at the stands, the Acorn scene is thriving.

Quin Parker
quin.parker@acornuser.com

Free Adverts

•Available at no cost, Greater Mancheter, A3000 monitor, dot matrix printer and steel stand. Call Peter on 01706 646769 after 6pm.

•RISC Palmtop, 8mb Machine hardly used with manual. £39 + P&P, Telephone 020 8318 5155 (Ask for Frank)

•RISC600, Original Box, All manuals, Easiwriter Professional, Draw Extra Turbo, Lemmings and some Clipart installed. Plus loads of fonts. reasonable offers. 07786 802256

•Acorn items for sale:
[1] Single slice Risc PC. ARM610; 6MB RAM; 1MB VRAM; 420MB HD; Cumana CD-ROM; RISC OS 3.50. Original mouse, keyboard, manuals and boxes.

(2) Two slice Risc PC. StrongARM SA-110; 64MB RAM; 2MB VRAM; 2GB HD; 24-speed CD-ROM; RISC OS 3.70. Original Mouse, keyboard, manuals and boxes.

(3) Psion Series 3c PDA. 2MB RAM; Mains adaptor; Leather Case; PsiRisc Acorn link software. All original boxes and manuals.

(4) Cumana SCSI2 Podule.

(5) CJE 5x86 PC second processor card for RiscPC. 133MHz, 512k cache. Comes with PCPro software.

(6) Computer Concepts LaserDirect4 laser printer plus podule. All software and original manuals.

(7) Epson GT9000 A4 flatbed SCSI scanner. Original boxes and manuals.

(8) Software (all boxed with manuals and bits): Artworks; Eureka v3; Ovation Pro; Impression 2; Fireworkz Pro; Mr Clippy; ImageFS 2; SparkFS; Keystroke; PCSound Professional; Win95FS; WMF IT; Clip IT; ImageMaster; ANT Internet Suite 2; Compression; ArcFax; Virtualise; Font Directory 2; Touch Type; PublishArt; PublishArt 2. Any reasonable offers for all items (or combination of items) above. P&P charged at cost or available to collect.
Contact Jon Aylwin 029 2041 0678 or jon@aylwin.org.uk

• Two Master 128s, 3 disc drives, 1 Cub Monitor, 2 mice, software, £50 buyer collects. East Kent Coast. Phone 01303 87364.

• Eagle M2 multimedia card; replay video production, HQ video stills, digital stereo sound sampler, full MIDI IN/OUT/THRU facilities, RISCPC compatible. Offers around £160. Multimedia software; Midiworks, Prosound, Cineworks (includes AppleFS) and Genesis Professional £35 each plus postage or £120 for all three. Eagle M2 plus all four packages £250 plus postage. Enquires or offers 0151 547 3993 or email aokai@tiscali.co.uk

• A two foot stack of Acorn User magazines for sale, complete with cover discs, from Sept 1994 to end 2001. Also other Acorn magazines and discs. Best offer secures this 12kg pile. Tel. Coventry, 02476 319519

• Wanted: All Acorn A3000s, A3010s, A3020s, A4000s, A5000s, A4s, Risc PC 600 & 700s, StrongARM Risc PC's, Kinetic Risc PCs. Anything considered. Can travel. 07930 507815 or 07775 776217.

• Acorn A5000 including monitor etc plus additional software including Advance suite. Any sensible offer considered. Contact Robert on 0191 5191231 or at robertvardill@beeb.net

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A bear and her travels

Do you know what Geocaching (or Geocacheing) is? I didn't either until someone told me about a children's hospice called Naomi House and their globe-trotting representative, Naomi Bear.

The world is now circled by satellites that send out signals that allow the Global Positioning System to work, a system that will, on the commercial level, locate you to within a radius of about 6 metres.

Small commercial GPS hand units, now down to a couple of hundred pounds each, can pick up the GPS signals, automotive versions drive the map guidance systems for cars. It's all very clever.

And people, being people, can make a game out of it, and the game can become something more.

The basic idea is to have individuals and organizations set up caches all over the world and share the locations of these caches on the internet. GPS users can then use the location coordinates to find the caches. Once found, a cache may provide the visitor with a wide variety of rewards. All the visitor is asked to do is if they get something they should try to leave something for the cache.

Doesn't sound very hard does it? You are given the coordinates so you know where it is. Seems pretty easy. It is deceptively easy. It's one thing to know where an item is, it's a totally different story to actually get there.

With a typical GPS unit you can determine your approximate location on the planet. Coordinates are normally given in Longitude and Latitude. You can use the unit to navigate from your current location to another location.

You don't need to know all the technical mumbo jumbo to play Geocaching. All you need to do is be able to enter what is called a "waypoint", where the geocache is hidden.

The rules for Geocaching are very simple:

Find a cache

Take something from the cache

Leave something in the cache

Write about it in the cache's logbook

Of course the idea is that you create your own cache (or caches, as well). You can be very sneaky, you can for example, create two caches but only reveal the location of one and have details to the second one in the first one.

Perhaps you've played a Treasure Hunt game on a sunny (or rainy) Sunday, chasing across the countryside looking for clues? Well, this is the same but on a potentially global scale.

A large cache might consist of a waterproof plastic bucket placed tastefully within the local terrain. The bucket will contain the logbook and any number of more or less valuable items. These items turn the cache into a true treasure hunt. You never know what the founder or other visitors of the cache may have left there for you to enjoy. Items in a bucket cache might be: Maps, books, software, hardware, CD's, videos, pictures, money, jewellery, tickets, antiques, tools, games, and so on. It is recommended that items in a bucket cache be individually packaged in a clear zipped plastic bag to protect them.

The location of a cache can be very entertaining indeed, it might demonstrate the founder's skill and possibly even daring. A cache located on the side of a rocky cliff accessible only by rock climbing equipment may be hard to find. An underwater cache may only be accessed by scuba. Other caches may require long difficult hiking, orienteering, and special equipment to get to. Caches may be located in cities both above and below ground, inside and outside buildings.

The skilful placement of a small logbook in an urban environment may be quite challenging to find even with the accuracy of a GPS.

Hitchhiking the world

So how does Naomi Bear come into this? Simply this, there are games within the overall game of Geocaching. One of these is the hitchhiker which is an item that you can move from cache to cache, there are numerous hitchhikers travelling the world, there's a candle, a Mr Potato Head and Naomi Bear.

To create a hitchhiker you get a "Groundspeak Travel Bug" which is essentially a uniquely coded tag, you attach this to your hitchhiker (Naomi wears it round her neck) and you can use the code to place messages on a specific web page on the Geocache site. Without the code you can't place messages, hence only people who have met a hitchhiker can report on its progress.

You then place your hitchhiker in the first cache report it on the web site, and tell your friends, perhaps go on the Geocaching message forums to say what you've done. Someone will come along pick up your hitchhiker and take it somewhere else.

We have reproduced some of the messages relating to Naomi Bear here so that you can see her progress. So far she's gone over 8,600 miles and is about to jump from Colorado to the Middle East.

When someone finds a bug they go on to the Hitchhiker's web page and log it by clicking on the "Found it? Log it!" by clicking on the text link in the upper right hand corner of the Travel Bug's page.

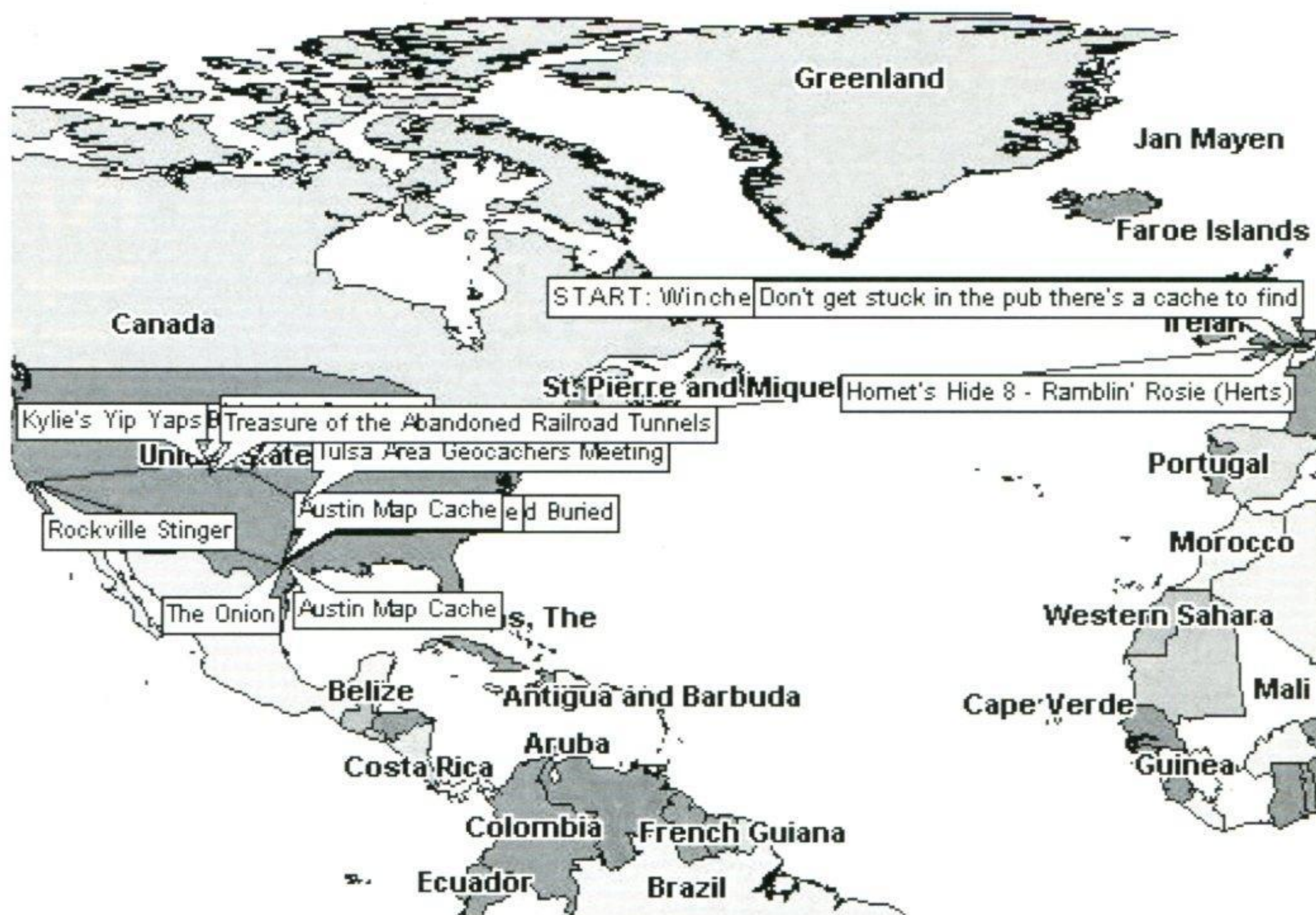
You can upload messages as mentioned but you can also put up pictures, photographs of you and the hitchhiker as you can see from some of the pictures here.

What you can do with Geocaching is a matter of imagination, you can use the web site in order to learn about the world, with a whole range of concepts from just different countries as far as longitude and latitude.

Potentially a whole school can get involved, there are Geocaching racing games where two or more hitchhikers try to race from one location to another, only being moved by other Geocachers.

Or you can try to get a message across as Naomi House has done with Naomi Bear, the opportunities may not be endless but they are extensive. Find out all about it from **www.geocaching.com**

please don't forget to subscribe to your next issue of Acorn User





Naomi Bear's Travel Log

Sunday, January 19, 2003

Tim & June placed Naomi Bear in "Winchester Cachers & Friends late Xmas pub social" (a cache created by Paul Blitz).



Monday, January 20, 2003

Note from Tim & June: We placed Naomi Bear in the safe hands of Pharisee during the Winchester Cachers meet in Winchester. We know she will be in safe hands, thanks for your help Pharisee.

Monday, January 20, 2003

Pharisee retrieved it from Winchester Cachers & Friends late Xmas pub social by Paul Blitz:

I was given the honour of starting Naomi on her outward journey and duly collected her from the Winchester Cachers & Friends late Xmas pub social. She survived a wild and wet trek up the M3, M25 and finally the M1 and has settled in to her temporary home at Chez Pharisee. Reluctant though I am to let her go so soon, she will be on her way again this coming weekend. Hopefully.

Friday, January 24, 2003

Note from Pharisee: Naomi and I have spent the last hour searching through the cache pages for her next temporary home. She is one very particular bear not just any old box will do. She knew just what she was looking for. A new cache that not many people have visited, preferably in a wood or forest and in the very best part of the country.

Most importantly it should be a nice, roomy ammunition box that will keep her safe and dry until it's time to move on again. We think we have found just what she is looking for and intend to make the journey into the forests of deepest Essex tomorrow. She is very excited.

Saturday, January 25, 2003

Pharisee placed it in "Don't get stuck in the pub there's a cache to find by David -&- Kirsty"

Naomi Bear finds a new place to stay. A nice new cache in a warm, dry ammo box. What more could any little bear want?

Thursday, January 30, 2003

Faye & Brad retrieved Naomi Bear from "Don't get stuck in the pub there's a cache to find by David -&- Kirsty"

Naomi Bear is on the move again! She enjoyed her visit to the ammo box, but wanted an evening or two in a nice warm house, so she stowed away in my pocket! She will be on her way again in a couple of days time, after she has thawed out from the snowstorm today!

Saturday, February 01, 2003

Note from Faye & Brad: It looks like Naomi has decided to emigrate after all the snow here recently! She asked me to say a big hello to everyone at Naomi House, and that she is thinking of you all and hopes you are all ok. Watch this space as it looks like Naomi could be

heading off to the USA next week... She is very excited!

Sunday, February 02, 2003

Note from Faye & Brad: Naomi is nice and refreshed after her few days with us and has now said her goodbyes and left for Hornet's house, ready for her trip to the USA later this week. Good luck Naomi, it has been great having your company for the past few days. Bon Voyage! Faye, Brad and Kids

Sunday, February 02, 2003

Faye & Brad placed Naomi Bear in "Hornet's Hide 8 - Ramblin' Rosie (Herts) by Peter Howard" (Travelled 44.83 miles W)

Sunday, February 02, 2003

The Hornet retrieved Naomi Bear from "Hornet's Hide 8 - Ramblin' Rosie (Herts) by Peter Howard"

Naomi was picked up from Hornet's Hide 8 ready to embark on a long voyage to California in the safe hands of The Hornet! Wish her well.

Thursday, February 06, 2003

The Hornet placed Naomi Bear in "Rockville Stinger by Hero's Clan" (Travelled 5296.71 miles NW)

Monday, February 10, 2003

Chaosbuster retrieved Naomi Bear from "Rockville Stinger by Hero's Clan"

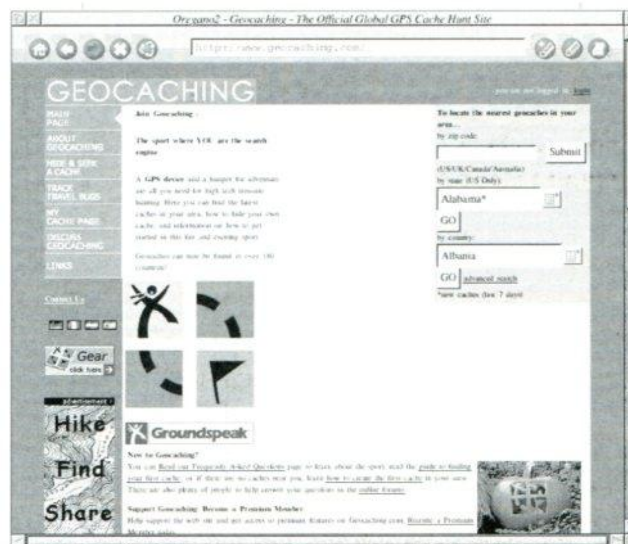
Found Naomi Bear! Here from Houston, TX for the AT&T Pro-Amateur Golf Tournament in Monterey, CA and visiting my husband's parents in Antioch, CA. Will provide pictures when we get home.

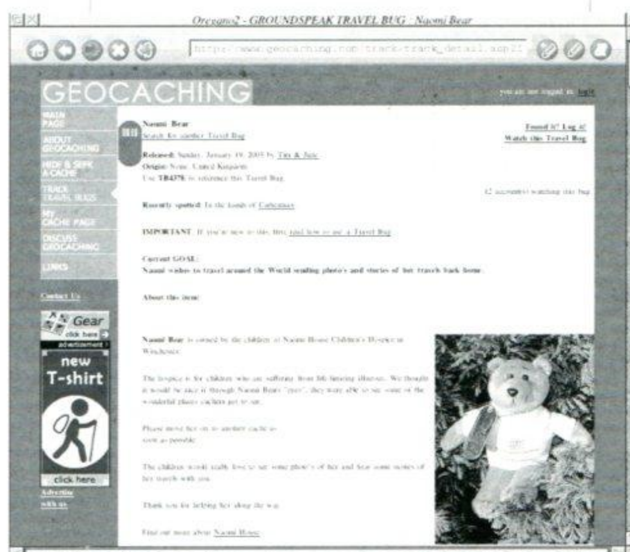
Sunday, March 02, 2003

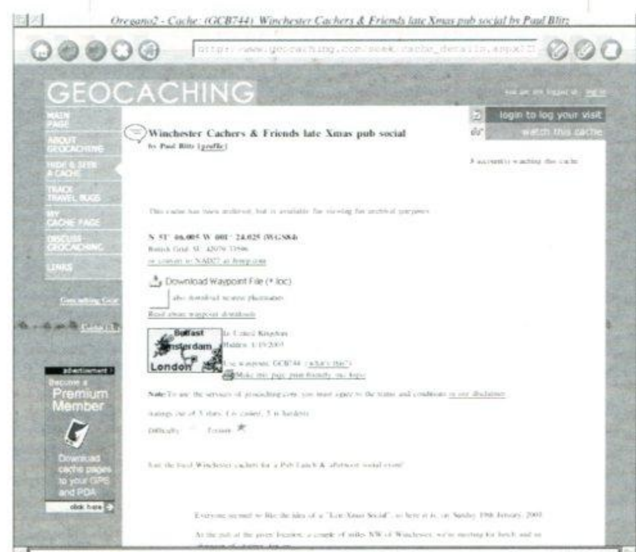
Chaosbuster placed Naomi Bear in "The Onion by Outofbounds" (Travelled 1494.78 miles E)

Thursday, March 13, 2003

TxHiPowr placed Naomi Bear in "Austin







Map Cache by TxHiPowr" (Travelled 27.24 miles N)

At this point Naomi spends some time going round in circles ending up back at the same cache. She ends up on a farm with lots of pictures and then zooms off to Colorado. She visits "Mingo" which is the oldest cache in existence apparently. Until finally:

Tuesday, September 09, 2003

Sample80132 placed Naomi Bear in "Treasure of the Abandoned Railroad Tunnels by Dylan, Sara, Amy, and Les" (Travelled 11.45 miles NW)

Saturday, September 20, 2003

Catherman grabbed it:

I went to "Treasure of the Abandoned Railroad Tunnels" specifically to pick up Naomi Bear. I really want to help this little bear, and the children of Naomi House Childrens Hospice in Winchester, UK, see the world. We passed some other Geocachers and asked them if Naomi was still at the cache.

They told us they had her. We talked for a bit and their family decided to let Naomi Bear go with me to Iraq. Thank you so much Travelling Everts! Naomi wants to visit the children in Iraq. I plan to get the Naomi Bear Traveling Bug to a cache in Iraq or Kuwait very soon so she can travel somewhere else. I am sure Naomi will keep me safe!

Monday, September 22, 2003

Note from Catherman:

Naomi Bear visited the Fort Carson JAG office today. She helped the soldiers with their work and learned new stuff along the way. She really had fun! She and the soldiers of Fort Carson hope all you are doing well. Catherman and Naomi are getting ready to fly across the ocean next week so they can visit the children in Iraq. They will send more pictures of the adventure when they get there. See you soon!

Pam Turnbull
education@acornuser.com

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Are you a prude?

How much more about sex do you wish you'd known? Does sex education chill you to the bone, with images of inadequate sex education flashing before your eyes? Well it was National Parenting Week from the 20th to 25th October. Did you do your bit in the fight against ignorance?

Like most things it's the fear of talking about it rather than the actual discussion that is much worse. But just how do you deal with the sensitive subject of sex and relationships? We live in a sexualised society and according to a new survey commissioned by Sense Interactive CDs parents may often feel ill-equipped to offer advice on these topics to their own children: nearly a third of parents surveyed by Sense (32%) said that their own sex and relationship education had been non-existent. And a staggering 83% of teenagers found that their parents were embarrassed or unhelpful when it came to advice about sex and relationships. 63% of dads suggested school was the best place for their children to find out about sex and 42% of parents suggested their GP's.

The teenagers surveyed were more worried that their partner might think that they were "no good at it", 39.7% as opposed 36.8% of teenagers thinking it was ok to have sex as long as they were safe. So that's roughly 2% of teenagers who are more concerned about their sexual performance than their health. So by sparing our own embarrassment are we as a nation failing our children? And whose responsibility is it anyway?

MPs have already warned that poor sex education and the Governments under-funding of clinics are leaving young people in ignorance. And despite the startling facts Sexual Health is still not a government funding priority. David Hinchcliffe Chairman of the Health Select Committee, who published their shocking report earlier this year, said, "I do not use the words lightly, but during the course of this enquiry it has become plain that with sexual health we are looking at a public health crisis".

Amazingly, 75% of parents surveyed think their children already received sufficient education about sex and relationships at school. These findings suggest that many young people need support and advice to help them deal with sex and relationships, including developing the skills and self-esteem to handle pressure. But, is the Government's call to put sex education on the National Curriculum, just a case of too little too late. Shouldn't parents be offering clear, honest, information and practical advice and support on all aspects of sex and relationships at home?

A new CD-Rom developed by Sense Interactive CDs with advice and support from the National Children's Bureau, may help parents bridge this gap. The CD is also approved by **www.curriculumonline.gov.uk** and has the full support of the Mother's Union and responds to the explicit demands of young people.

Commenting on the Sense, Sex and Relationships CD-Rom, Simon Blake, Assistant Director of Children's Development at NCB, said: "We hope that this CD will help young people to realise that they are not alone in being anxious or ignorant about sex and relationships, and that feeling under pressure is not a good reason to start having sex. Its aim is to give them the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to build good relationships now and in the future. Sense, Sex and Relationships is also intended to make the adults in young people's lives (parents, carers and teachers) more comfortable about talking to them, reassuring them about their concerns and answering any questions they may have."

Developed in close consultation with young people, the Sense Sex and Relationships CD-Rom offers good advice in a fun, interactive format. Real case studies encourage young people to think through the dilemmas that they may face, as well as providing practical answers to awkward questions. The Sense CD-Rom is designed to be used both at home and as a teaching aid in schools with the choice of either:

A Parents'/Carers' Booklet offering tips and advice, encouraging parents to discuss sex and relationships with their children as well as helping them to feel more confident when discussing the subject. To read the NCB's - Sex Education Forum review of the CD-Rom go to **www.ncb.org.uk/sef/reviews/review_10.htm**

This CD-Rom and accompanying Parents'/Carers' Booklet is available to teachers, parents, carers and young people alike from selected branches of WH Smith, Amazon, (**www.amazon.co.uk**), **www.sensecds.com** and **www.ncb.org.uk** or by calling the order line on 01732 748 664.

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Espresso Education is the leading provider of educational broadband content in the UK, with a comprehensive digital library of high quality, video-rich teaching resources and interactive student activities. Espresso combines television features, online news articles, instructional video and audio clips, interactive games and Web sites, all categorised into modules that directly support QCA and National Curriculum requirements.

Espresso Education (Stand B82) will mark a year of outstanding growth with a bumper release of new resources and digital tools. Adding new content and two key tools to help teachers and students unlock the potential of digital resources and raise achievement in the classroom.

New curriculum content includes: Three new resource banks covering Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity. The Faiths module is made in partnership with the London Grid for Learning and builds upon the success of the first Faiths modules launched last year.

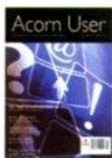
Addressing a difficult area of the curriculum to resource the "Researching the Past" module assists pupils in building the research skills to learn about the past.

In "Using the News" Espresso have developed a series of tools to help teachers save time in managing, finding and embedding the Espresso archived items in everyday teaching.

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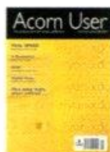
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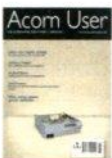
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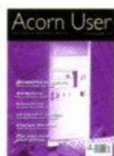
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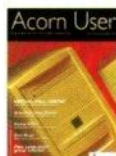
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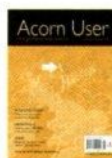
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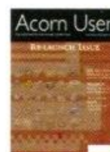
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